Beyond the Book: A Novel Media-Based Approach to Resident Learning and Reflection

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Setting and Problem

We initially launched a book club in our family medicine residency program to engage residents in meaningful discussions around key competencies,[1] including professionalism, professional identity, ethics, and communication. These themes are essential to their development as physicians,[2] but we found that residents struggled to keep up with the reading assignments due to their demanding schedules and academic responsibilities. Participation waned, and it became clear that while the topics were crucial, the format was not sustainable for our residents. The traditional book club required reading 250 to 300 pages or more, which took residents multiple days to weeks to complete, adding to their workload outside work hours. We needed a new engaging platform to achieve the same learning objectives in a way that fit within residents' schedules and avoided contributing to burnout.

Intervention

In response to these challenges, we launched the Resident Media Club. Media Club meets quarterly and leverages diverse media formats—films, documentaries, TED Talks, and podcasts—as the basis for group discussions. This innovative approach requires no prework, allowing residents to engage during the session itself, even while on busy rotations. Each meeting focuses on a selected media piece that aligns with core professional themes, fostering open, reflective conversations in a relaxed, informal environment. Examples of media include the documentary *Healing US* (1 hour 15 minutes) to discuss health care's impact on patients; the movie *The Whale* (1 hour 57 minutes) to address empathy and bias regarding obesity; and Brian Goldman's TED Talk, *Doctors Make Mistakes. Can We Talk About That?* (19 minutes) to explore professionalism and medical errors. Both residents and faculty contribute to the selection of media, ensuring that topics are relevant, thought-provoking, and aligned with educational goals. Faculty facilitate the sessions, guiding a 40- to 45-minute discussion while allowing room for residents to explore ideas organically, promoting personal and professional growth.

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This new approach directly supports key Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education Core Competencies, including Professionalism, Interpersonal and Communication Skills, and Systems-Based Practice.[1] It encourages critical thinking, reflection, and lifelong learning, all essential components of providing patient-centered and evidence-based care.[3] Importantly, the format reduces preparation time compared to the previous book club model and keeps discussions focused. Media Club sessions occur during residents' dedicated education time within work hours, eliminating the need for extra work outside of clinical responsibilities.

Outcomes to Date

Media Club has successfully addressed the challenges we faced with the previous book club model. Residents have reported that the accessible format fosters deeper engagement with professional topics, without the added burden of pre-session work. The shorter media format (1-2 hours vs days-weeks) with ample discussion time (40-45 minutes) during protected education blocks have made participation feasible, even for those on demanding rotations. The relaxed setting encourages participation and has strengthened the sense of community within the residency program. Discussions often extend beyond the intended themes, enriching residents' understanding of professionalism, communication, and ethics in real-world settings. Additionally, the collaborative media selection process has provided opportunities for exposure to diverse perspectives while maintaining alignment with core competencies.

While occasional scheduling conflicts limit participation, quarterly meetings ensure residents can engage throughout the year. Some variability in media preference has been noted, but this diversity has sparked broader discussions and deeper reflections. Media Club has proven to be an effective and sustainable intervention, saving residents time while enhancing professional development and promoting well-being. By fostering teamwork, personal growth, and a sense of community, it has become a valued part of our residency program, cultivating a cohesive and engaged learning environment.

References

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