

The Role of Improvisation in Osteopathic Medical Education



Objectives

- Discuss the need and rationale for theatre improvisation in the medical school curriculum.
- Discuss the student benefits of learning how to perform the medical interview and to be able to be malleable with the patient interview utilizing improvisation.
- Discuss the improvisation techniques utilized in the medical classroom.
- Provide experiences in theatre improvisation to improve listening and observation skills.
- Discuss the value of theatre improvisation as it relates to spontaneous response.

In what ways are theatre improvisation and doctoring similar?



Background

- “Improvisation” has been defined as intuition guiding action in a spontaneous way. (Berk and Trieber, 2009).
- A handful of medical schools across the country have implemented Improvisation into the medical school curriculum
- Improvisation is a conversation skill that, like other social and interactive skills, can be taught. (Berk and Trieber, 2009).
- Improvisational skills optimize communication with patients during medical encounters and impart valuable skills essential to providing empathetic, supportive patient-centered care. (Shochet, et al., 2013)
- Physicians are regularly surprised by concerns raised by patients such that they must be adept at improvising. (Shochet, et al., 2013)
- Improvisation can promote spontaneity, intuition, interactivity, inductive discovery, attentive listening, nonverbal communication, as-libbing, creativity, and critical thinking (Berk and Trieber, 2009).

Rationale for incorporating Improvisation into the medical classroom:

- Build effective interpersonal communication skills
- Improve bedside manner
- Improve ability to think on one's feet
- Increase rapport
- Decrease awkward silences
- Students act with patients, have to pass Physical Exam portion of boards

Skills learned by students through improvisation:

- Physically explore ways to improve empathetic response and increase humanistic awareness within the patient encounter
- Active learning
- Reading body language
- Responding appropriately to unexpected situations



Survey says:

In a survey given to the second year medical students at Rowan-SOM:

- 92% of students stated that they had little or no experience with improvisation.
- 80% of the students indicated that the Improvisation Seminar was either helpful or very helpful in improving their ability to communicate effectively.
- 29% percent of the students stated that they thought the techniques they learning in the seminar would be very helpful
- 49% of the students thought that the techniques they learned in the seminar would be somewhat helpful as they began their training and seeing patients in the office setting.

Translation to Standardized Patient Lab Scores

Medical Literacy

	AY2013-2014 (n=122)	AY2014-2015 (n=123)
• Nonverbal communication enhancing rather than detracting	Strength: 96.0%	98.4%
• Avoidance of words undignified or unsuitable for patient age/station	94.6%	95.2%
• Language Choices: Avoidance of unexplained medical jargon	91.3%	96.8%
• Empathetic behavior in response to a patient concern or issue	72.5%	91.9%

Translation to Standardized Patient Lab Scores

Challenging/Difficult Patient

	AY2013-2014 (n=122)	AY2014-2015 (n=123)
• Nonverbal communication enhancing rather than detracting	Strength: 96.1%	95.1%
• Customer Service: message neither defensive nor dismissive of patient complaints	89.9%	96.7%
• Allowed patient to express self with little interruption	92.8%	99.2%
• Appearance: confidence/capability/comfort through encounter	87.6%	88.6%
• PEARLS of patient care worked gracefully into conversation	83%	85.4%

Techniques:

- Physical Warm Up
- Name Game
- Zip, Zap, Zop
- Yes, and...
- Conflict Resolution Scenario



Physical Warm Up / Name Game

- Opens the mind and body for creative and spontaneous action
- Develops awareness of the group, builds trust and multitasking skills
- Encourages playful game interaction in preparation for improvisation

Zip, Zap, Zop

- Builds energy, focus, listening and responding skills



Yes, and...

- Develops affirmative listening and responding skills, working from the imagination in playful interaction



Conflict Resolution Scenario

- Develops observations skills and spontaneous listening and responding skills in an acting situation



Conclusion

- Reflections on the workshop experience, thoughts about value of theatre improvisation in the medical curriculum moving forward.



References

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