

A MIXED METHODS EXPLORATION OF FIRST YEAR VETERINARY STUDENTS' LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN A MOLECULAR AND CELLULAR BIOLOGY COURSE

Kaur G, Gordon-Ross P

College of Veterinary Medicine, Western University of Health Sciences, Pomona, CA

Abstract:

The goal of the Molecular and Cellular Biology course is to develop veterinary students' ability in interpreting scientific literature. Additionally, the course is designed to enhance student's knowledge of the basic sciences through critical review of assigned scientific articles followed by content expert led discussions of biochemical, cellular, and/or molecular topics presented in each article. The standard end of semester course evaluations focus on learning outcomes and not the learning experience. The purpose of this study was to explore student learning experience. At the end of the course, students were invited to complete a survey that asked about their learning experience, the factors affecting their learning, and how the course impacted their learning in context of the curriculum. Follow-up interviews were conducted. Qualitative data were explored using template analysis. Following themes arose from the data: positive learning experience; maintaining alignment of the course with the overall curriculum enhanced learning; primary literature relevant to the current clinical case were helpful; shorter, easier to read articles enhanced learning; the course reinforced learning and encouraged reading of primary literature; lengthier articles required excessive time and decreased motivation; the course increased student ability to comprehend scientific literature; the course enhanced the student's learning experience in context of the curriculum; and the ability to comprehend primary literature will be helpful in future. Understanding the student learning experience, in addition to learning outcomes, provides comprehensive information about the course and adding the qualitative data to standardized numeric course evaluation, makes course improvement more accurate and efficient.