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Teaching Philosophy

Education is not static but an evolving process that requires continuous adaptations and reflection. As a licensed clinician and clinically- oriented anatomist I must develop an environment that stimulates intellectual curiosity. Promoting students to think critically and independently to solve problems is the foundation for true education (King, 1947). Anatomical education often gets labeled with “it’s a lot of memorization.” In my opinion, the major downfall in anatomical education is getting lost in the weeds. Although, being able to identify structures within the body is a critical aspect of anatomy, by itself it is essentially useless knowledge. For example, a student’s ability to identify the substantia nigra within the midbrain is not the key learning objective. The focus needs to be rooted in promoting active learning where students can discover why atrophy to the substantia nigra negatively influences purposeful movement.

Application of content knowledge is crucial for academic and clinical success. Gawande (2010) states, “Failures of ignorance we can forgive. If the knowledge of the best thing to do in a given situation does not exist, we are happy to have people simply make their best effort. But if the knowledge exists and is not applied correctly, it is difficult not to be infuriated.” The author goes on to highlight one of the greatest risks for healthcare providers is not ignorance but ineptitude, the failure to apply content knowledge (Gawande, 2010). Failure can be daunting and feel threatening at times. Instilling resilience is about students learning to take decisive action after failure. Failure can be one of our best learning tools, but it is dependent on what you do next. As an educator I need to guide my students through the learning process providing feedback to guide self-discovery.

As I continuously require my students to reflect throughout their learning experience, I too must reflect on my delivery and assessment of content. My consumer feedback when analyzed with an open mind for adaptation, can be my greatest tool for success. The days of passive lectures are behind us. My consumer desires innovative use of technology, meaningful feedback, evidence-based teaching modalities, and cost-effective resources to enhance their learning experience. I have attempted to meet these needs by integrating cadaver dissection, virtual cadaver dissection, interactive games, and embedding multiple formats of resources within the learning management system. Strategic development and integration of Kahoot! like assessments into the canvas learning management system have been some of the most significant positive feedbacks on my student evaluations. To me, it is all about actively listening to my consumer and what will most efficiently enhance their motivation and desire to learn. Student-centered learning requires me as the educator to get out of my comfort zone and be willing to adapt my teaching modalities to enhance the learning experiences.

I believe the most important aspect of learning is creating an environment in which students can thrive not just survive. As an educator, I must be actively present and lead by example. Demonstration of my work ethic, aspiration of excellence, desire to love others, and continuous learning could spark the same desire in my students. I must always maintain a holistic view of my consumer and recognize that every aspect of their being will have an impact on their ability to learn. I need to always strive to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and know when to take decisive action.

My desire is to become an educator whose focus is never self-centered. I want to continually demonstrate how to be caring, present, and responsible. Striving for excellence to better those around me is my personal goal while learning all that I can to help others achieve great things.