Teaching in a Small Group

Angela Jackson, MD
Associate Professor
Assistant Dean, Office of Academic Affairs
Boston University School of Medicine

CRIT 2012
Goals of the session:

• Overview of the adult learning process

• Understand when and why Small Group Teaching is effective

• Strategies to use during teaching sessions

• Identify potential teaching challenges
The Adult Learning Process

Adult learners want:

• To help set the learning objectives
• To use what they learn right away
• To problem solve, not just learn facts
• Feedback, so they can evaluate their own progress
Adult Learning Process

Help set the learning objectives → Collaborative

Use what they learn right away → Clinically relevant

Problem solve → Practical

Includes feedback → Encourages self-assessment

CRIT 2012
Small Group Teaching:

Context

Teacher  Learner

Content
Small Group Teaching

Shared responsibility for the learning process
Small Group Teaching:

Opportunities for the teacher-

• To assess the learner’s needs and learning agenda
• To highlight misconceptions and individual knowledge gaps
• To observe learner’s reasoning skills
• To encourage self-assessment (metacognition)
Small Group Teaching:

• Examples of small group teaching

• When is this format useful?
Small Group Teaching: Planning the Session

Before you start...

Who?

What?

How?

CRIT 2012
“And so you just threw everything together? ... Mathews, a posse is something you have to organize.”
Small Group Teaching:
Planning the Session

• **Who** are your learners?
  – Motivation level?
  – Background knowledge?
  – What do they want to learn?
Small Group Teaching: Planning the Session

• **What** do you want to accomplish in the session?
  – “Need to know” vs “Nice to know”
  – What **three** points should they walk away with?
Small Group Teaching:
Planning the Session

• **How** will you meet your teaching goals?
  – Techniques to use
  – Keep them involved

• **How** will you know that they are learning?
Small Group Session Work Sheet:

- **Who** are your learners?
- **What** do you want to accomplish in the session?
- **What** is challenges do you anticipate?
- **How** will you meet your teaching goals?
- **How** will you know that they are learning?
Small Group Session Work Sheet:

• **Who?**
  - Chief Residents, experienced teachers; tired from sitting and listening to talks

• **What?**
  - Provide some specific, useful techniques, likely to be used, encourage experimentation

• **How?**
  - Interactive didactic, modeling some of the tips during the session
  - Take home points on the 3x5 card

CRIT 2012
Small Group Teaching: Running the Session

Your role:

“facilitator” vs “the UPS guy”
Small Group Teaching:

- Teacher
- Learner
- Content

Context

CRIT 2012
Small Group Teaching: Running the Session

Your role:

• prepare the general plan for the session
• set the tone for the session
• pay attention to the environment
• encourage participation
• keep the discussion on track
• time management
Adult Learning Process

• Collaborative
• Clinically relevant
• Practical
• Encourages self-assessment
Small Group Teaching: Running the Session

Tips and Techniques

CRIT 2012
Small Group Teaching: Running the Session

Tips and Techniques:
- Know their names- and use them
- Learners should talk to each other
- Count to 10
- The “Coffee Cup Technique”
- 3 x 5 cards
- Use summary statements for key points
Small Group Learning: Running the Session

Using Questions as Teaching Tools:
Small Group Learning: Using Questions as Teaching Tools

Ask about something that is worth knowing
Small Group Learning: By asking questions you can...

- Assess learners knowledge level
  
  *(What do they *NEED* to know?)*

- Elicit their learning agenda
  
  *(What do they *WANT* to know?)*

- Promote active thinking

- Assess their understanding of what is being discussed
  
  *(Links new concepts with “real life” scenarios)*
Small Group Learning: Using Questions as Teaching Tools

Types of Questions:

• **Recall**: first level of interaction with the material (list, name, report, define, etc)

• **Analysis/Synthesis**: demonstrate understanding (compare, categorize, distinguish, design, etc.)

• **Application**: apply new concepts to a specific clinical setting (interpret, apply, demonstrate, choose, etc)
What challenges have you faced in small group teaching?
Small Group Learning: Challenges

- Group with learners with different knowledge levels
- The “Learner with Frontal Release”
- The “Know it All”
- The “Bored Learner” -- “Sleeping Learner”
- The “Shy Learner”
Small Group Teaching: Challenges

- Unpredictability of the session requires creativity and a tolerance for the unknown.
- Learner’s needs and interests may not be what you predicted.
- “Thinking on your feet” to refine or revise the learning objectives.
- Group dynamics.

CRIT 2012
Small Group Learning: Keys to success

1) Plan ahead
2) Pay attention to the process, not just the content
3) Self-assessment: Learners AND teachers

*) Experiment
Now, the 3x5 card...