# Research Journal of Pharmaceutical, Biological and Chemical Sciences

## Teaching Medical Professionalism by Using Movie as a Tool: Feedback from the First Year Military Medical Students.

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**ABSTRACT**

Nowadays, the use of movies has become an ongoing trend in medical education, especially with regards to developing of professionalism attributes. Medical students in pre-clinical years often have limited personal life experience, and observing the life of a character in movies helps to develop an empathetic awareness in different realities of others. This study is determined to assess whether movies can assist the students in developing medical professionalism and to analyze the students' feedback after screening of the movie. The new intake of first year medical students (n= 46) from the National Defence University of Malaysia participated in this study. After screening of "Patch Adams" movie, the students participated in a discussion session conducted by a trained facilitator. Students were then encouraged to take part in a role play model of communication between the doctor and the patient followed by discussion. At the end, the feedback forms containing self-administered questionnaires were distributed. Most participants had positive perception towards the use of movies in teaching medical professionalism. Key aspects of patient-doctor relationship related to respect, empathy and sensitivity were scrutinized. Data analysis from questionnaires revealed that the movie was relevant to medical profession, helpful in thinking about a doctor's professional behavior, enjoyable, useful for future endeavors, and the post movie discussion session was well facilitated. This study highlighted the military medical students' opinion with regard to using movies in teaching medical professionalism. The students felt that movies enhanced their learning and could motivate the applicability of professionalism.

**Keywords:** medical professionalism, movies, students' feedback

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# INTRODUCTION

*"When you treat a disease, sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. But I guarantee you, when you treat a person, whatever the outcome, you always win."*

--Hunter "Patch" Adams

Nowadays, when medical students want to watch a movie they do not necessarily need to skip their lectures. Introduction of a variety of audio-visual media in the classroom setting, including movies that enhance emotions and create a degree of realism, has been an ongoing trend in medical education over the past two decades [1]. Reflection on the actions of the character helps the students to understand sympathy and to develop an empathetic awareness in different realities of others, which are important keys in the medical profession. Movies are perceived as part of the learning process especially with regards to developing of arguably non-teachable attributes of medical professionalism [2-3]. Professionalism is an important issue for the medical personnel; it emphasizes humanistic values and ethics essential for students to evolve into good physicians [4]. The medical educators train the students for resolving ethical or professional issues to become righteous physicians through character development [5-9]. Movies help stimulating reflection on professionalism in medical learners [10], especially first year medical students often have limited personal life experience, and observing the life of a character in movies is helpful. Movies are used as a teaching tool to initiate a discussion with students in professionalism module, one of the components of personal and professional development (PPD) curriculum in the Faculty of Medicine and Defence Heath, National Defence University of Malaysia (NDUM). The aim of this study is to determine whether movies can assist the students in developing medical professionalism and to analyse the students' feedback after screening of the movie.

# MATERIALS AND METHODS

The first year medical students (n= 46) from the NDUM participated in this study. The convenience sampling was used and verbal informed consent was obtained from the students. The movie "Patch Adams" was chosen for this study. The post-movie session was conducted by a trained facilitator. After screening the movie, students started with discussing their opinions about the movie and its role in medical education. Students were then encouraged to take part in a role play model of communication between the doctor (a medical student acting as a doctor) and the patient (also a medical student acting as a patient) followed by discussion. The facilitator discussed about the communication process and explained the objectives of the role play exercise. The observing learners considered what helpful feedback they can provide at the end of the role play. The discussion was focused on the following components of doctor behaviour: (a) respect; (b) empathy; and (c) sensitivity/ genuineness. At the end, the feedback forms containing self-administered questionnaires with the Likert-type scale for assessment of students' perception on movies and subsequent discussion were distributed. The questionnaires were focused on relevance of the movie to medical professionalism, level of enjoyment while watching the movie, acceptability of scenario, role of doctors, and usefulness of movies for future medical doctors. The questions related to discussion assessed how relevant, interesting and useful was the discussion, as well as the role of facilitator in post movie discussion session. Scoring was based on a 3-point Likert-type scale. Answer options included: (1) 'disagree' (2) 'not sure', and (3) 'agree'. The data was analysed using SPSS version 21.0.

# RESULTS

The forty-six medical students from year 1, who were studying medical professionalism component in PPD module, participated in this study. The 46 participants in this study had a mean age of 20.1 years old; 63.3% were male. By ethnicity, 83.3% of participants were Malays, 10.0% were Chinese and 6.7% were Indians. The majority of participants were military cadets (66.7%), the rest were civilian students (33.3%).

The following are participant statements about the movie "Patch Adams" recorded during post-movie discussion session.

*"The philosophy is really fantastic"*
(Malay, male, 20 years).

*"I learnt from movie to improve the doctor-patient relationship"*
(Malay, female ,20 years).

*"Sometimes we should change from routine way and try to do things better in more humanistic way"*
(Chinese, male, 21 years)

*"Dr. Patch's character shows that we should help people with understanding and love no matter what"*
(Indian, female, 20 years)

*"His character teaches me not to give up on what I believe in"*
(Malay, male, 20 years)

*"Patch's Adams character is amazing"*
(Malay, female, 20 years)

*"I gained inspiration and motivation from this movie"*
(Chinese, male, 20 years)

Table 1 demonstrates the key points for discussion after role play model exercises on patient-doctor communication in post-movie session.

The students' feedback on professionalism based on the data from questionnaires is shown in table 2.

**Table 1: Discussion after role play model exercises on patient-doctor communication**

| Component | Key points for discussion on doctor's behavior |
|---|---|
| **a. Respect** | Did not introduce him/herself |
| | Did not call the patient by his/her name and did not greet him/her |
| | Shook the patient's hand but in a half-hearted manner |
| | Did not introduce the other doctors to the patient |
| | Did not appear interested and ready to listen |
| **b. Empathy** | Did not show the ability to understand the patient's experiences and feelings accurately |
| | Did not ask how the patient felt or thought |
| | Did not pay attention to the patient's non-verbal communication – his/her look of frustration at not being able to say or ask anything |
| | Patient was not allowed to talk – interrupted the patient when he/she started to talk |
| | No listening and learning process |
| **c.Sensitivity/ Genuineness** | Discussed the patient's case using medical jargon in front of the patient to the other doctors |
| | Not sensitive to the fact that patient is a doctor who has knowledge about his condition |
| | No interest shown in the patient |
| | Did not ask "how are you doing?" to the patient – did not show concern |

**Table 2: Key items in students' feedback form**

| Items | (N=46) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Agree (%) | Not Sure (%) | Disagree (%) |
| Movie was relevant to medical profession | 46 (100) | 0 | 0 |
| Movie helped think about doctor's professional behavior | 42 (92.2) | 4 (7.8) | 0 |
| Movie helped think about patient -doctor relationship | 40 (86.9) | 4 (8.69) | 2 (4.3) |
| Movie was enjoyable | 45 (98) | 1 (2) | 0 |
| Movie was good for learning teaching medical professionalism | 44 (95.7) | 2 (4.3) | 0 |
| Post-movie discussions were useful | 38 (82.6) | 8 (17.4) | 0 |
| Scenario was acceptable | 39 (84.9) | 5 (10.8) | 2 (4.3) |
| Facilitator of post movies sessions was good | 46 (100) | 0 | 0 |
| Movie was useful for future physicians | 44 (95.7) | 2 (4.3) | 0 |

Table 2 showed that all respondents (n=46, 100%) reported that movie was relevant to medical profession and the facilitator played valuable role in the discussion. Nearly all students agreed that the movie was enjoyable (n=45, 98%), really good for learning professionalism (n=44, 95.7%), and useful for their future career as medical doctors (n=44, 95.7%). Most of the participants found that movie helped them to think about doctor's professional behaviour (n=42, 92.2%) and patient-doctor relationship (n=40, 86.9%), scenario was acceptable (n=39, 84.9%), and post-movie discussion was useful (n=38, 82.6%).

## DISCUSSION

Our study has some similarities with the recent study of Alis and Nazlan [10], specifically the use of quantitative and qualitative approach, and evaluating students' feedback with questionnaires. Alis and Nazan [10] stated that 88% of rated films were good and 54% of students felt that terminally ill patients were fully portrayed in a very realistic way in the film. The students were prompted to think to a great and considerable degree with regards to the following aspects of medical profession: how to talk with patients about prognosis, how to reveal the bad news, how to talk with patients about their end-of-life treatment wishes and how physical pain is treated [10].

We used the movie for teaching medical professionalism in the first year PPD module based on the findings from previous studies. Several studies revealed that medical students become less emphatic and more detached from their patients due to the long duration of clinical training [11-15]. Byszewski et al [16] stated that a lack of formal teaching on personal attributes of medical profession during clinical years remains a challenge due to dispersion of learners in clinical areas, so that role modelling carries almost exclusively the burden for learning professionalism. However, we decided to focus on the experiences of the first year medical students in early pre-clinical years after being introduced with the empathy and personal attributes of humanity by using movie.

The study of Blasco et al [17] stated that a broad range of biographical experiences and situational factors influence the PPD and promotion of empathy. Patient care and professionalism are vital for medical doctors including respect for patient and peers, and awareness of professional values. The teachers or facilitators can discuss the non-teachable issues, especially empathy and patient-doctor relationships and emotions, to achieve medical professional concepts. The study of Blasco [18] was conducted as the group discussion after movies facilitated by lecturer together with medical students in order to stimulate one another to express views more openly. According to Sulmasy [7], medical educators have noted the moral development as a cornerstone of medical profession. In our study, we (facilitators) discussed with the students on key points of medical professionalism such as empathy, respect and sensitivity by using role play model exercises in post-movie discussion session.

Medical education programs that rely primarily on didactic lectures do not necessarily improve patient outcomes or physician performance [19-21]. Teaching and learning of professionalism can be further enhanced by various means [22-23]. Mueller [24] stated that didactic lectures for professionalism can be enhanced with audio and video (e.g. showing examples of professional and unprofessional behaviours) and using an audience response system which is to some extent similar to our study.

There are some limitations in this study. The results of qualitative analysis were not validated with the students and there is a possibility of differences in understanding of issues related to medical professionalism between facilitator and students. Additionally, we did not explore the students' knowledge after the professionalism component of PPD module in year 1. Evaluating students' feedback on the use of movies in teaching medical professionalism throughout their clinical years will help to provide more reliable findings. Despite these limitations, this study presents a broad spectrum of student feelings and attitudes which could be useful for further medical education curriculum development, and fills the gap in the relatively scarce literature regarding the use of movies in teaching medical professionalism in Malaysia.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlighted the military medical students' feedback with regard to using movies in professionalism component of PPD module. Post-movie discussion session with role-play exercises contributed

to students' understanding of respect, empathy, and sensitivity. The students felt that movies enhanced their learning related to PPD and could motivate the applicability of medical professionalism.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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