

## Original Research Article

### POETRY: RESPONSE OF MEDICAL STUDENTS TO USE IN TEACHING DERMATOLOGY

#### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Poetry is one of the major categories of literature which characterized by have a meter form, rhyme, rhythm and other figurative expression. It can be in cooperated in other forms literature such as prose and drama as it was the focus of the World Poetry Day 2023 theme with the theme: 'Be a Poet even in Prose'. Poetry is being encouraged even in the teaching of medicine particularly in countries such as Australia, United States of America and United Kingdom. This pilot study focused on the response of medical students to poems that were part of the lecture slides.

**Method:** Short excerpts of poems taken from a collection of poems 'Scar Songs' formed part of the lecture slides for two different topics on two different days during the dermatology posting for Year 5 medical students. The response of the medical students were judged by a voice vote, hand count, body language and attention paid to the poem during the reading.

**Results:** An average of 75% raised their hands in affirmative that they enjoyed the class. There were positive emotions such as smiles and laughter by the students. On the lecture assessment form a student stated the use of poetry aided his understanding.

**Conclusion:** The inclusion of poems in dermatology lectures were received with positive emotions by most of the medical students. Poetry is a useful tool in the teaching of skin disorders

**Key words:** Dermatology, Education, Medical, Poetry, Student

#### GLOSSARY TERMS

**Dermatology:** The part of medicine and surgery concerned with taking care of skin problems

**Education:** The systematic order in receiving knowledge from an organised institution

**Medical:** Relating to medicine

**Medicine:** The science of detecting, treating and preventing diseases

**Poetry:** The branch of literature which is characterized by meter form (verses), rhythm and other figures of speech

**Student:** A person who has chosen to give their time to acquiring knowledge in a particular field

### **PRACTICE POINTS:**

- 1) Medical educators in dermatology can bring in poems using the lay man's language
- 2) The aim of writing medical poems is to stimulate interest in a difficult topic.
- 3) Students are also encouraged to write poems on a dermatology lecture they enjoyed most.
- 4) Students are also encouraged to write poems on a dermatology lecture they understood most.
- 5) There could be comparison of experiences of the topics they understood most or enjoyed most and that which they enjoyed least or understood least.

### **NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR**

The contributor is a dermatology lecturer at Rivers State University. She is also the immediate past president of Seaview Poetry Club.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Poetry is one of the major categories of literature which is characterized by having a meter form, rhyme, rhythm and other figurative expressions.[1] It can be incorporated into other forms of literature such as prose and drama as it was the focus of the World Poetry Day 2023 theme : 'Be a Poet even in Prose'. Poetry is being encouraged even in the teaching of medicine particularly in countries such as Australia, United States of America and United Kingdom. It is known to enhance empathy that drives doctors to give their best to their patients.[2] This study focused on the response of medical students to poems that were part of the lecture slides.

### **AIM**

The aim of this study is to assess the reception of poetry by medical students when used in the teaching dermatology.

### **METHOD**

The timetable had included a day to focus on dermatology education(OSCE & Poetry). On the first day of commencement of dermatology posting the students received a lecture on 'Common bacterial infections '. A poem on impetigo formed part of the lecture slides. The poem was read out to the students as part of the lecture. They received the lecture note which contained the poem. No evaluation was done that day on how they saw the poem. They were mostly attentive during the lecture.

The students had their scheduled lectures on 'Common papulosquamous lesions- Lichen planus and Psoriasis' which was on the 3rd day of the dermatology posting. Short excerpts of two different poems were put up after the lecture- first on Lichen planus and second on Psoriasis. The two poems were taken from a collection of poems titled 'Scar Songs'- by Amadi E.

***Excerpts of poems 1st day***

*Impetigo*

*Honey crusts of this impossible pet,*

*Impetigo let go of me*

*Let go of me, impetigo*

*I won't pet you impetigo*

***Excerpts of the 2<sup>nd</sup> day***

***1<sup>st</sup> Poem***

*Lichen planus*

*Likes the planet*

*Likes plain us*

*Likes the plain ones*

*Like the leeches implant*

*Linear lichen*

*Polygonal planus*

*It doesn't pain us*

*The sight scares us*

***2<sup>nd</sup> Poem***

*So Sorry!*

*Like limpets on limbs*

*Symmetrical silvery scales*

*On scalp, sacrum and skin*

*Pruritic, painful, pustules, patches and*

*Plaques, placed on palms and plantars*

*I feel so sorry for psoriasis*

## **RESULTS**

During the reading of the poems, the students were excited and giggled as they had their class mates read out the poem. A voice vote assumed 100% response. 75 %(30) out of 40 students present, raised their hands in affirmative that they enjoyed the class. On further inquiry two responses were taken from those who did not enjoy the poetry session. The reasons were – one student did not feel that poetry was relevant to the exams; another student did not fully understand the poem. On the lectures assessment form one student(2.4%) 1 of 41 respondents, stated specifically the use of poetry made the lectures enjoyable.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study showed that the use of poetry in teaching dermatology was found enjoyable by majority of medical students. It provoked giggles and laughter as it is known to have such characteristics.[3,4 ] Although this was contrary to another study done by Shapiro et al.[5] This could be due to the difference in methodology as Shapiro assessed mask making and comics alongside poetry. Poetry is increasingly been used in medical teachings to stimulate physicians and other health workers to describe their work experience and even to teach students.[1]Sharing experiences is known to increase one's knowledge. In other to enhance the use of poetry as an educational tool amongst medical students and other health trainees, students are being encouraged to also pick elective courses in the field of literature, reflect on existing art work or a poet's work on any medical theme, write their own feelings about a work and get others to criticize it.[4] Limitations also exist when using poetry as a tool for medical education as this study shows. The major limitation is the ambiguity that results from multiple complex meanings which can arise from the diction of poet. [2, 6]The inculcation of poetry into the curriculum of medical teaching does not require any formal method and tutors , teachers and lecturers are encouraged to bring in a bit of poetry.[4]

The use of poetry in teaching dermatology can be further enhanced by applying research poetics which involves transcribing spoken words of patients and clients into verses.[7] This can be modified and used in translating dermatology texts into a language that is easily understood by the students.

## **CONCLUSION**

The inclusion of poems in dermatology lectures were received with positive emotions by most of the medical students. Poetry is a useful tool in the teaching of skin disorders.

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