

'NO SPONTANEITY IN LECTURES'

Learning lost in PowerPoint, say med students

Sumitra Deb Roy | TNN

Mumbai: PowerPoint presentations may be a common form of teaching in any classroom, but students in civic medical colleges are not happy with them. They complain that the technology has robbed them of the real joy of learning and that overworked lecturers simply read out from slides, many of which are downloaded from the internet.

A section of students had recently voiced their anguish in front of a Medical Council of India (MCI) representative that lectures lack spontaneity as teachers just read out the slides. A first-year MBBS student from the GS Seth Medical College said that animations with medical diagrams and multiple slides only add to their confusion. "Most of the time, the content is lost in pictures and slides," said the student, who did not wish to be identified.

A lecturer from Sion hospital made an interesting observation. "Given the patient load in public hospitals, there is very little time to put our thoughts in the PowerPoint presentations," he said. "I know of many who download it from the internet even if the content is not very relevant to our medical scenario, and students may not be completely wrong in disliking this mode of teaching," he said, quickly adding that he believes in teaching without any audio-visual aid.

MCI's member of board of governors Ranjit Roy Chaudhury said that he was aware of the misuse of this technology. "It is a good technology but is being misused," he said. He, too, felt that on several occasions, teachers seldom put their thoughts in their teaching. "Instead of giving a stimulating teaching experience, they just put some form of information on slides. This cannot be called teaching," he said.

Roy Chaudhury clarified that nowhere in the medical curriculum of 300-medical colleges was it compulsory for teachers to employ audio or visual teaching aids. "We do not specify any such thing," he said, lamenting that it is a technique which could have been used well.

A senior teacher from KEM Hospital, too, agreed with the students. "PowerPoint slides are originally meant for business presentations, so when used for active teaching, it obviously defeats the purpose," said the professor with a teaching experience of 12 years. "Students tend to become passive audience in the classroom and just wait for the class to get over," she added.

A PowerPoint presentation contains 45-50 words in one slide. So, students say that the entire lecture gets divided into several slides, bullet points and pictures. And, the slides, too, are overloaded with information adding to the confusion of students. "We are not asking for complete deletion of Power-Point from classrooms but a little more thinking in making those slides," said a student of Nair Dental College.

Director of medical education Dr Sanjay Oak said Power-Point should always be combined with a gripping lecture. "Audiovisual aids should supplement teaching," he said, adding that there cannot be any substitute to a good oratory lecture.

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