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Quote of the Month

"The process of lecturing is often caricatured as the transferring of the lecturer's notes to the students' notepads without any intervening thinking" (Geoff Isaacs, MD).



*"If I Still Like to Lecture,
Does this Make Me a
Dinosaur?"*

"Is the Lecture Dead?" Or Perhaps On Life Support?

In a provocative article published in *The Atlantic*¹, Richard Gunderman addresses what he views as the premature demise of the lecture as a teaching modality. Rather than pronouncing the lecture dead, Dr. Gunderman asks us to re-consider. His comments are worth thinking about, and I will do my best to summarize them in a few key points:

1. **Pedagogy:** it's true, learners need to be taught using a variety of methods (e.g., small groups, lectures, case studies). But there is nothing inherently boring about a lecture. After all, there are boring small group sessions too! In other words, there are good lectures and bad lectures, and we should attempt to learn the difference between the two – rather than dismissing the lecture entirely.
2. **Practice:** the ability to give a good lecture should be viewed as a "work of art". In other words, good lecturing takes many hours of dedicated practice before it can be considered as "effective". The opportunity to work closely with a colleague who has more experience can help nearly anyone become better at giving a good lecture.
3. **Purpose:** Gunderman suggests that the primary purpose of a lecture is not to transmit information to the learner. Information can be gleaned by reading a book or other similar means. Rather, a lecture's primary purpose should be to "engage the hearts and minds of the learner" and to "open learners' eyes to new questions, connections and perspectives that they had not considered before". Part information, but also clearly part inspiration. A good lecture is like a good story!
4. **Problem-Solving:** good lectures focus on a problem to be solved, or at least grappled with. Any information of a purely factual nature should be "brought to life" in the context of a clinical problem, so that learners come away with a sense of how the information applies to the real world and how they can solve the problem being addressed.

Gunderman states "to rid health professions education of lectures would be a grave error....our mission is not to supplant it, but to perfect it". What do you think? Thoughts & comments welcome!

David Musick, PhD

References:

1. Gunderman, R. Is The Lecture Dead?. *The Atlantic*, 2013. Accessed online March 25, 2014 at <http://m.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/01/is-the-lecture-dead/272578/>