EDITORIAL

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Celebrating excellence in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

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It has been almost three decades since Boyer (1990) introduced the concept of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). In their own disciplines, faculty members are required to stay abreast of emerging knowledge and to contribute to the literature so that they advance their field through well-informed inquiry and disseminated work. Although they also have educational responsibilities, faculty are neither similarly motivated nor are they incentivised to participate in educational scholarship. Consequently, their efforts in this regard are often based on personal belief and opinion rather evidence and scientific inquiry. This problem persists despite a growing body of evidence that adopting sound instructional practices and pursuing scholarly work related to teaching, will increase the quality of the institution's educational processes. In turn, this will enhance student learning and ultimately lead to better patient care. To achieve this end, teaching and learning must be scrutinised in terms of theory, methods, evidence, and outcomes. And faculty members who engage in teaching need to be rewarded for their participation in educational scholarship just as they are for efforts in their own disciplines.

In supporting educators' SoTL journey and enhancing the quality of their teaching, this special issue "Celebrating Excellence in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning" aims to demonstrate how educators adopt a scholarly approach and how they collect and present rigorous evidence of their effectiveness. It encompasses much of current health professions education, touching on topics such as interprofessional education, the globalisation of healthcare, the impact of COVID-19, vaccine hesitancy, and digital badges.

Educators from Indonesia shared their strategy for enhancing interprofessional education through community-based education (Kristina et al., 2023). Teams of students developed solutions to family health issues together. The authors found implementation challenges when applying this model, especially in terms of scheduling home visits. However, through this experience the students learned the value of teamwork and the roles of each of the representatives.

As a result of globalisation, there is a significant increase in the number of patients being admitted to hospitals outside of their home countries. The Emergency Department is often the first point of contact for these foreign patients and cultural differences naturally pose challenges. To address this issue and to help patients with different backgrounds obtain high quality care, some hospitals in Japan have initiated cultural awareness training for their doctors. While this is a positive step, doctors in the Emergency Department in Japan still face difficulties in this area. To address these challenges going forward, educators from Japan would like to identify the difficulties still encountered and eventually design scenarios, based on real life cases, for use in simulations (Oikawa et al., 2023).

COVID-19 has changed the way teaching has occurred and it has accelerated the use of technology in all phases of education. This special edition contains two Case Studies related to this issue. The report by Kushare et al. (2023) takes on the use of blended learning that occurred synchronously at different campuses in Malaysia. The report by Lim et al. (2023) focuses on student perspectives on the prohibition of direct patient contact during pandemic. It will be important to follow future developments in these areas as restrictions are lifted.

COVID-19 has not only affected teaching, but it has also had a profound influence on the practice of medicine. Vaccine hesitancy among patients is a growing phenomenon for which not all health care providers are prepared. Physicians may have misconceptions about what drives patient behaviour leading to the less effective provision of information and counselling. To better understand this issue and design a relevant curriculum to create awareness, Jenkins et al. (2023) explored medical students' reactions to vaccine hesitancy and their reflections on their own biases in patient interactions. The qualitative analysis of students' reflections offered by the authors is a useful basis for working with students around this issue.

In recent years, digital badges have increasingly become a part of the educational landscape. They constitute an innovative instructional strategy combing the teaching and credentialing of competencies to provide evidence for achievement. However, research in this area is scare. Truskowska et al. (2023) introduced a pilot project regarding the use of digital badges in a Psychiatry module offered as part of a continuous assessment programme. They evaluated the effectiveness of the digital badges based on students' perspectives of their utility, their level of engagement with the module, and their motivation to study. Students found the badges rewarding but noted that their value was unclear which would eventually lead to a loss of motivation.

Assessment has been a main topic of discussion in SoTL because it shapes how student learn and informs teachers about the effectiveness of their own work. Dayanidhi et al. (2023) present information about a radical curriculum and assessment reform that has been taken place in India. Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, a major competence, is often underrepresented in assessment. The authors established this through an analysis and comparison of the distribution of content tested, domain of learning and construct of the questions derived from undergraduate summative examination question papers on the topic from six universities across India. Also focused on assessment, Lim and Lim (2023) share an innovative assessment method – oral interactive assessment-- which they have implemented among the occupational therapy students. Instead of multiple-choice questions or short written answers, each student was assessed with a standardised actor who simulate concerned parents, asking questions about their children's development. While students are more anxious with this format, an interactive oral assessment has real world relevance.

There are several articles discussing initiatives that were conducted for faculty members in this special issue. For example, Lim et al. (2023) described a coaching programme aimed at providing educators a framework that helps students make discoveries and work towards their goals and training them how to question students. Field et al. (2023) offered a study in training their faculty members to teach and assess students' clinical thinking skills using a model. Goh and Schlegal (2023) examined the journey of scholarship in health professions education and suggested tangible small steps to start, sustain, and succeed along the SoTL journey.

Felten (2013) in his paper "Principles of Good Practice in SoTL" mentioned that good scholarship should be grounded in context because it takes place in a particular classroom, institution, organisation, and education system where the culture is bounded. Tan et al. (2023) elaborated this aspect in his article using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory (EST). Grant (2023), similarly, highlighted the notion that the practice of teaching is socially bound and highly dependent on the culture, content and context. She further described the relationship between medical educationalists and teachers in the entire SoTL journey.

Good teaching is multidimensional, challenging, and contextual as demonstrated by all the authors in this special issue. However, this is an excellent place to start and it encourages all of us to apply the same thoughts processes to our teaching as we do in our discipline-specific research. Teaching is a process of reflection on our practice and if we follow this dictum, more scholarly teaching will result in higher quality in learning among our students.

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Guest Editors

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