

# Implicit learning in medical education through print news media

Vishnu Prasad R, Madhanraj K, Zile Singh

Department of Community Medicine, Pondicherry Institute of Medical Sciences, Puducherry, India.  
Correspondence to: Vishnu Prasad, E-mail: vishnuprasath2@gmail.com

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## Abstract

**Background:** Medical education either to the undergraduates or to the postgraduates is ultimately aimed at improving the health and health care of the population. Curriculum of postgraduate medical education gives primary emphasis to self-directed learning and professional development. One of the main resources of information, opinion, and analysis are newspapers. Apart from imparting knowledge, newspapers also influence the understanding of issues by the readers.

**Objective:** To assess the utility, diversity, and abundance of print media news items on public health available for learning using print media scrapbook system.

**Materials and Methods:** The newspaper cutting from the print news media scrapbook prepared by four of the postgraduate students during the period of January 1, 2013, to December 31, 2014, were collected and grouped into various categories.

**Results:** Maximum of the news items appeared in the print news media were related to communicable diseases (24.8%) and health planning (17.5%).

**Conclusion:** Print news media report a variety of health updates and events in plenitude, which can serve as a good tool for learning in medical education.

**KEY WORDS:** Medical education, print news media

## Introduction

Medical education either to the undergraduates or to the postgraduates is ultimately aimed at improving the health and health care of the population. All medical educational and training programs are centered toward production of a workforce capable of improving the health care of the community

based on which learning outcomes are set; curriculum of the educational programs help the students to achieve these set outcomes. However, these learning outcomes and curriculum might differ for different specialities. The curriculum of the educational programs is designed in such a way that it has a proper mix of different modes of learning, which eventually guides the students in achieving the desired learning outcome. Curriculum of postgraduate medical education gives primary emphasis to self-directed learning and professional development. The permanence of change is unavoidable in medical education owing to ongoing progress in technology, newer developments, and even the society. Nurturing meaningful and self-directed learning among medical students is now recognized as a major goal of medical educators.

One of the main resources of information, opinion, and analysis are newspapers. Apart from imparting knowledge,

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newspapers also influence the understanding of issues by the readers. The mode in which the public health issues are offered in print media news can impact the response by the individuals. Newspapers can also serve as a source of “concrete experience,” as explained in the Kolb’s learning cycle, which eventually might lead to “abstract conceptualization” and “active experimentation.”<sup>[1]</sup> Although these stages of learning cycle can also be observed in traditional learning, newspapers provide an apt platform in learning novel first-hand knowledge. This study aims to assess the utility, diversity, and abundance of print media news items on public health available for learning using print media scrapbook system.

## Materials and Methods

As a part of postgraduate medical training in Department of Community Medicine, the postgraduate students follow the print news media regularly and newspaper cuttings of public health importance and maintain a separate record (print news media scrapbook). News articles are compiled from two leading English national news dailies regularly. Weekly presentations are made in the department by the postgraduates, where all the public health-related issues in the print news media of the previous week are discussed scrupulously with public health experts. The newspaper cutting from the print news media scrapbook prepared by four of the postgraduate students during the period of January 1, 2013, to December 31, 2014, were collected and grouped into various categories.

There is possibility that all the print media news item may not be included in the scrap book. In our study, we incorporated only the news articles from the scrapbooks maintained by the postgraduate students and not from the news agency databases, as our study is aimed at assessing the scrapbook system.

## Results

The maximum of the news items appeared in the print news media were related to communicable diseases (24.8%) and health planning (17.5%). The news articles covered a majority of the issues, updates, events, experiences, and so on, across various different topics related to health [Table 1].

## Discussion

Simple steps can be taken to alter the conventional lecture format of medical training. This process of practicing the print news media scrapbook is one such way in learning apart from conventional lectures. Medical educators often deliver complex material in a format that does not allow the positive learning engagement recommended by cognitive researchers and theorists.<sup>[2]</sup>

Learning through print news media plays a conspicuous role in all domains of learning, viz., cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The majority of which is concerned with cognitive learning. This exercise improves the knowledge and comprehension of the students. Students tend to analyze, evaluate,

**Table 1:** Distribution of news items appeared based on various public health issues

Topics	Frequency of appearance of news item	Percentage
Communicable diseases <sup>a</sup>	251	24.8
Health policies and planning <sup>b</sup>	177	17.5
Non communicable disease (DM, HTN, and cancer)	149	14.7
Maternal and child health	69	6.9
Demography and family planning	63	6.2
Vector-borne diseases (malaria, dengue, etc.)	53	5.2
Antibiotic resistance/pharmaceutical industry/drugs safety	48	4.7
Hygiene, sanitation, and safe drinking water	48	4.7
Nutrition	44	4.3
Obesity	26	2.6
Environmental health	20	2.0
Mental health	15	1.5
Smoking and tobacco usage	15	1.5
Road traffic accidents	13	1.3
Adulteration	11	1.1
Alcoholism and health	7	0.7
Geriatric health	3	0.3
Total	1,012	100

<sup>a</sup>Including tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and polio.

<sup>b</sup>Health system, health technology, and health expenditure.

and apply the knowledge gained more often. Maintaining a scrapbook might help the students for further reference in future.

In their study, de Semir *et al.*<sup>[3]</sup> showed that the order in which a journal article appeared in the press release was also associated with the number of newspaper stories published on the same topic. Press releases are now being implemented by many journals so as to encourage journalists working for the news media to bring the material they contain to wider audiences. Entwistle<sup>[4]</sup> in a study observed that 81% of journal articles mentioned in the British press were included in journal press releases.<sup>[4]</sup> Another study by Bartlett *et al.*<sup>[5]</sup> revealed that press releases both good and bad news equally but the newspaper articles mostly report bad news than good news. Most of the physicians often gain insights about new medical research via the news media, instead of the medical journals.<sup>[6]</sup>

Thereby, news print media serve as an important tool as a source of information regarding the advancements in the field. There are also a certain limitations such as the process of maintaining a scrapbook may be time consuming, and there is always a chance of misrepresentation of actual facts by the media.

## Conclusion

Print news media reports a variety of health updates and events in plenitude, which can serve as a good tool for learning in medical education, whereby it provides the learner with a different environment from the traditional lectures and text book-based learning.

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