

Council of Residency Directors in Emergency Medicine Academic Assembly 2019

Teaching “On the Fly”

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March 31, 2019

Residents play an important role in medical education as near-peer teachers to medical students, and peer-peer teachers for junior residents.

The role of residents as educators is challenged by the busy pace of the emergency department, and can be limited by the quick turnover of patients. Ironically, when boarding slows the emergency department, novel learning can be difficult as well.

Strategies for teaching on the fly

1. Focus teaching session into digestible moments. Micro-learning can facilitate teaching in a fast paced environment that may encounter multiple interruptions.
2. Making simple patients sick – the “what if…” game. This is useful when the flow or acuity of patients is low.
3. Debriefing – what just happened and why. This is helpful for highlighting important and critical actions.
4. Setting your learner up for success – using focused directions, pausing for effect, getting a commitment from your learner. By creating a welcoming environment, the learning opportunity solidifies key concepts.
5. Visual pearls around the department – whiteboards, post-it’s, diagrams, etc. These quick ways of highlighting pearls and creating focused learning points can be used to interject teaching into a busy shift that does not allow for dedicated time.
6. Self-directed learning activities/challenges – when you really can’t make the time, facilitate the learner’s practice of searching for answers in evidence-based manners and allow them to be the teacher.

Teaching on the fly isn’t always about creating material “on the fly.” Preparation to develop areas of focus, create a repository of teaching points, and exploring of different teaching styles can facilitate deciding to teach on the spot.



Make a commitment to yourself

Write down at least one skill to work on that you believe can help you improve on-shift education in your department.

What are some topics that you feel comfortable enough with to convey select learning points/pearls if that type of patient encounter were to take place?

Suggested Reading

Wolff et al. Not Another Boring Lecture: Engaging Learners with Active Learning Techniques. The J of Em Med. Vol 48, No 1. 2015.

Resources for on-shift teaching to get you started

