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Learning the ways of teaching: medical students as co-assessors and peer teachers

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Title: Learning the Ways of Teaching: Medical Students as Co-Assessors and Peer Teachers
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Introduction/Background:
The first cohort of graduate entry medical students from the University of Wollongong (UOW), Graduate School of Medicine commenced their final year of training in 2010. They have experienced extensive educational opportunities for the development of clinical skills, including small group tutorials with simulated patient volunteers, medium fidelity simulation, and early, integrated clinical hospital & community placements in regional and rural areas of NSW. Clinical skills education for UOW medical students commences at the beginning of their first year, focusing on tutor led small group sessions with a major emphasis on skill practice and continues for the first two years on campus. Sessions include traditional examination and history with simulated patient volunteers as well as an extensive procedural skills, regular competency assessment and medium fidelity simulation sessions. The interprofessional Clinical Skills team is currently considering expanding our team of tutors to include senior medical students as peer teachers for all on campus clinical skills tutorials, competency assessment and medium fidelity simulation. Evidence in the literature is encouraging on the subject of peer teaching and learning, describing its effectiveness, positive outcomes and the mutual benefits for both tutors and tutees. We hope that by involving senior medical students in the teaching process, the opportunity to develop their clinical skills and confidence will expand even further, while simultaneously providing advantageous benefits for junior students and clinical skills staff as well. We also recognise, however, the importance of considering potential problems in the development of a peer assisted learning program particular medical student as a co-assessor and assistant tutors in simulation.

Purpose/Objectives:
To highlight the research and present current evidence on peer based teaching and learning environments in clinical education. Using the evidence available, explore the potential benefits of peer teaching and learning in small group clinical skills tutorials in a post graduate medical school. Discuss possible difficulties arising from the use of senior medical students as tutors for junior medical students.