

## **Perception of staff in Qassim Medical College about Faculty development activities**

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### **Abstract:**

**Objective:** To explore the faculty member's perceptions and attitudes regarding the faculty development activities.

**Research Design and Methods:** An online survey that included all staff at the College of Medicine, Qassim University was done. Data were collected about the academic position, age, gender, academic phase, and the duration of employment at the college; the questions related to the faculty development activities included the level of participation and perceptions about quality and usefulness of these activities were answered.

**Results:** The response rate was 68% (75 out of 110), More than half (56%) of respondents had attended the faculty development activities regularly. For the rest, the reasons for not attending regularly were other commitments (47%) and unsuitable timing of activities (53%); 60 % of respondents thought that attending the faculty development activities should be part of the faculty's evaluation criteria. The most favored topics of the faculty development seminars were medical education and research. However, new faculty members had unfavorable comments about the medical education seminars. A majority of respondents preferred workshops as a method of learning. Finally, 91% of respondents thought that the content of the sessions should be posted on the College website.

**Conclusion:** The medical education and research topics are the most favored by the faculties. Workshops are the most preferred method of learning. Newcomers are less satisfied with the medical education seminars.

**Keywords:** faculty development, Saudi Arabia.

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## Introduction

The most important resource in any institution of the higher education is to have faculty members. As such, faculty development must be considered an essential element in nurturing and supporting this invaluable resource. By enabling faculty members to meet individual goals as teachers, scholars, and leaders, the broader goals and missions of the educational institution are also met. <sup>(1)</sup>

Faculty development activities have been designed to improve teacher effectiveness at all levels of the educational continuum (e.g. undergraduate and postgraduate). <sup>(2)</sup> Twenty years back some authors reported that, most clinical teachers have no formal training on teaching methods. <sup>(3)</sup> Few years later, Association for Medical Education in Europe (AMEE) produced a Guide that showed a more comprehensive role for the teachers. The guide explained "While the increasing emphasis on student autonomy in medical education has moved the centre of gravity away from the teacher and closer to the student, the teacher continues to have a key role in student learning. A good teacher can be defined as a teacher who helps the student to learn." <sup>(4)</sup>

Faculty development is a reflective process that includes deliberate introspection, determination of one's own needs and demands of the work, identification of the gaps, and taking actions. The realization of the gap, the difference between required knowledge and current knowledge, is frequently the primary motivating factor towards pursuing further training in pedagogy. From an institutional perspective, realizing the gap is essential for better planning and more efficient resource allocation. <sup>(5)</sup> Although the need for teaching skills training is increasingly recognized, the information on the characteristics of ideal teachers in settings other than clinical teaching has received relatively less attention in medical education. <sup>(6,7)</sup> Some authors have studied faculty training in certain specific skills like Curriculum Development or 1-minute preceptor. <sup>(8,9)</sup>

The aim of this study was to explore the faculty members' perceptions and attitudes regarding the faculty development activities.

## Research Design and Methods

### Research setting

The College of Medicine, Qassim University, was established in 2000-2001. Salient features of its curriculum are: hybrid PBL, community oriented, integrated, and spiral. Faculty Development Program (FDP) is organized on a weekly basis, each of the four weeks of a month having a different activity, as follows: week1: Medical Education Seminar. week 2: Update, week 3: Workshops, and week 4: Grand meeting.

### The questionnaire

The questionnaire included questions about academic position, age, gender, academic phase, duration of employment at the college; additional questions asked about the faculty's perception about FDP. It also elicited information about the respondent's opinion about each of the four activities, using a Likert scale. The clues given for opinion making were uniform for all activities, as follows: the topics and sessions are interesting, I am interested in topics related to other specialties, I attend this activity regularly, sessions are usually informative, and sessions are helpful for my career development.

We used a 5-point anchored scale. We computed a quantitative score (reflecting the approval rating of various faculty development activities) from the Likert scale for each component of the questionnaire, by assigning the following weights: Strongly agree +2; Agree +1; No difference 0; Disagree -1; strongly disagree -2.

### Data collection

In February and March 2010, all staff at College of Medicine, Qassim University was emailed a link to a short, anonymous, and online survey of quantitative and qualitative questions.

### Data Analysis

All questionnaires were coded and entered into an electronic database. Data analysis was carried out using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 12. Frequency distributions with numbers and percentages of all variables were produced.

### Ethical Considerations

The study proposal was scrutinized and approved by the Medical Research Center of Qassim College of Medicine. An anonymous self-administered questionnaire was used, and raw data were treated with strict confidentiality and used only for research purposes.

**Results**

After all possible efforts to encourage participation, 75 questionnaires were completed and returned (response rate: 68%). More than half (56%) of respondents had attended the faculty development activities regularly. The main reasons for not attending these activities regularly were reported as: other commitments (47%) and inconvenient timing of activities (53%). Sixty percent (60 %) of respondents thought that, attending the faculty development activities should be a part of the faculty's evaluation criteria. The most favored activities were medical education seminars and research methods workshops. A majority (91%) of respondents thought that, the content of the sessions should be posted on the College website.

The box plot for the total score of approval rating, for clinical updates, showed that, lecturers have more positive impression about this activity. Also, the basic sciences faculties

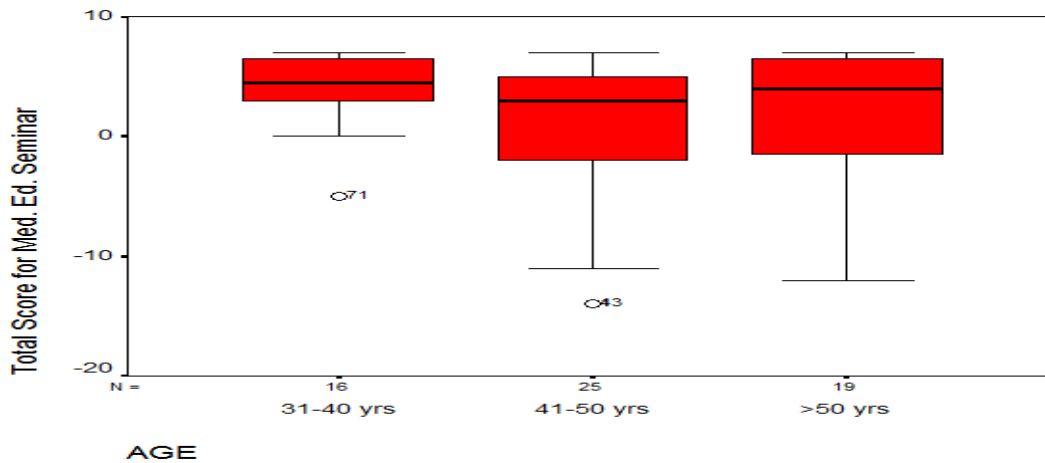
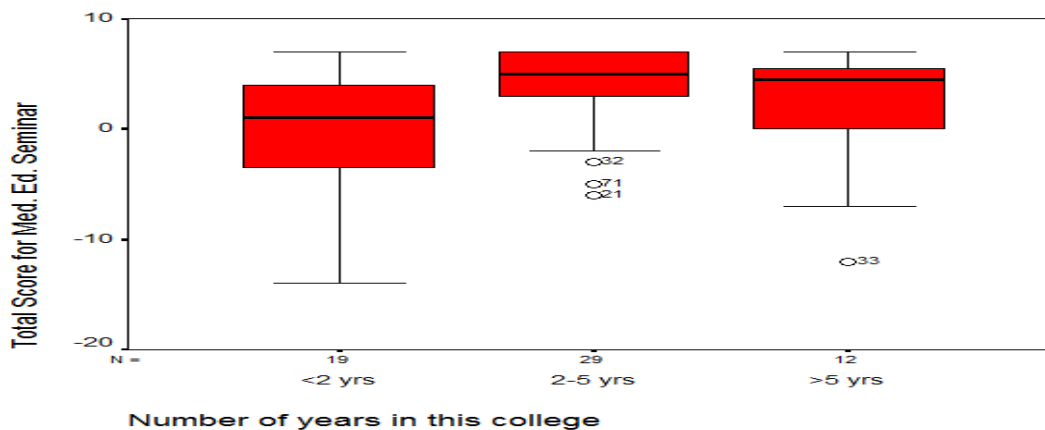
have a slightly better impression of the clinical update than the clinicians. Regarding the medical education seminars, older and younger faculty members think that, it provide them with information, while those in 40-50 years of age think it is not informative. **(Table 1)** Lecturers scored medical education were the lowest, on other hand assistant professors showed more interest in the medical education. **(Table 2)** Likewise, the clinical phase faculty staff also has a more positive impression about the medical education seminars, compared to the basic sciences faculty. Younger faculty members have the most positive impressions about the medical education seminars, while faculty older than 40 are less impressed with it. **(Figure 1)** The newcomers have the most negative impressions about the medical education seminars, while those having more than 2 years experience at Qassim have a better approval rating for this activity. **(Figure 2)**

**Table (1)** The total score for medical education seminar, by **age of faculty**

Age	Topic	Likes	Participates actively	Information is:		
				Useful	Helpful	New
31-40 yrs	.67	.41	.50	.67	.71	.59
41-50 yrs	.00	.08	.12	-.24	-.04	.28
>50 yrs	.35	.52	.35	.41	.14	.39
Total	.30	.32	.30	.23	.22	.40

**Table (2)** The total score for medical education seminar, by **academic position**

Academic Position	Topic	Likes	Participates actively	Information is:		
				Useful	Helpful	New
Professor	.35	.35	.35	.28	.08	.38
Associate Professor	.09	.36	.18	-.27	.27	.73
Assistant Professor	.67	.48	.50	.58	.65	.48
Lecturer	-1.20	-.60	-.60	-.60	-1.20	-.60
Total	.30	.32	.30	.23	.22	.40

**Figure (1)** The total score for medical education seminar, by age**Figure (2)** The total score for medical education seminar, by duration of employment

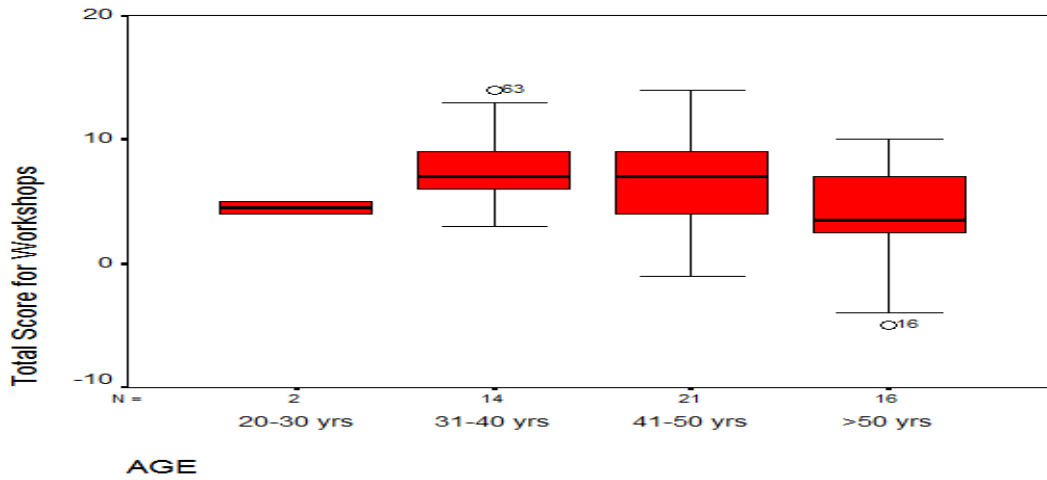
With regard to workshops, the faculty members younger than 50 years have a positive impression about it, while those older than 50 are less impressed. **(Figure 3)** It seems that the workshops are quite popular, particularly among the new-comers. The staff seems to have a good impression about the workshops, regardless of their academic position.

The grand meeting was not particularly popular, but the older faculty members feel more comfortable about it. **(Figure 4)** Demonstrators, who are also relatively younger and have less experience, did not seem to like the Grand meeting.

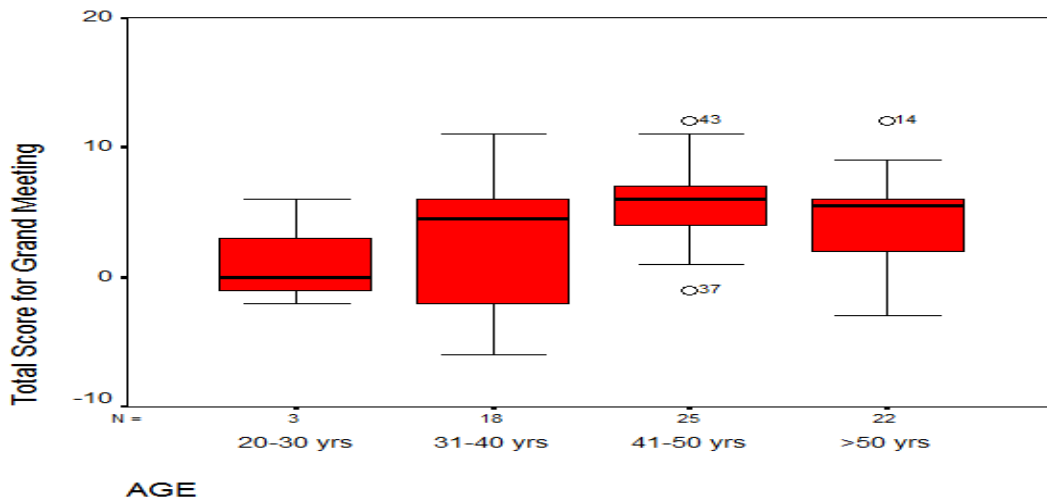
The new-comers have a preference for clinical updates, but not as much for the medical education seminar. **(Table 3)** The overall approval rating score was the highest for the workshops, followed by grand meeting.

To improve the quality of the faculty development activities, the respondents have some suggestions such as: introduction of more relevant topics, inviting external speakers, reducing frequency of activities to once a month; no other activity (academic or otherwise) should be scheduled at the time of an FDP activity. Some respondents suggested that, some FDP activities should be mandatory for all staff, such as formulation of exam questions. The suggestions with regard to motivation of the staff to attend the FDP activities included: giving certificates to the participants, inviting external speakers (new faces), introduce students as speakers, etc. Some respondents suggested that attendance should be Mandatory for those not having an overlapping activity.

**Figure (3)** the total score for workshop, by age



**Figure (4)** the total score for Grand meeting, by age



**Table (3)** the total score for all activities, by duration of employment

Number of years in this college	Update	Medical Education	Workshops	Grand Meeting
<2 yrs	6.4167	-0.6842	7.3529	5.7000
2-5 yrs	3.5556	3.7241	5.2593	3.7941
>5 yrs	2.5714	1.9167	6.0000	3.3571
Total	3.9434	1.9667	6.0566	4.2647



## Discussion

Our study showed that, the felt need of training in skills related to medical education and research is the highest among faculties. One of the studies <sup>(5)</sup> similarly reported a felt need for improving knowledge in the areas related to function well as a teacher. Another study <sup>(10)</sup> showed similar results. According to this study, the lecturers give a better approval rating for the update sessions, probably because they are young and they feel the need to learn more new things about their discipline.

It was also shown that, Basic science faculties have a better impression about Update sessions, compared to clinicians; this may be because clinicians are usually interested in their own specialty, whereas Basic sciences faculties are interested in most of the new developments in medicine.

In our study, the faculty members younger than 40 and older than 50 years think favorably about Medical Education Seminars, while those in 40-50 years age-group are not convinced about the usefulness of the seminars. This finding may be explained in terms of a higher willing for learning among the young (who are naive) and the old (who are wiser to claim that, they know it all)

The fact where new faculty members do not like the Medical Education Seminars as much as those who have an experience of 2 years or more, could be explained in terms of a lack of understanding about the problem-based learning among the newcomers, who mostly come from traditional systems of medical education .

This study showed that, workshops are the most preferred method of learning among our faculty, which was also found in other study <sup>(11)</sup> which reported that small group discussions used in (94%) of the faculty developments. Overall score was high for Grand meeting, which means that faculty members like to discuss educational issues in a large group including the higher authorities of the college. An ongoing weekly conversations forum provides the faculty members the opportunities to explore and learn about facets of teaching in a safe, informal environment. <sup>(12)</sup> Faculties gave some suggestions to encourage attending FDP, such as certificates, external speakers, etc., while among hospitals with ongoing FD programs, a study <sup>(11)</sup> showed 47% offered CME credit, 40% offered certificates of participation,

and 47% offered reduction or waiver of fees to most or all faculties (when applicable). These incentives to attend may also be beneficial in our setting.

## Conclusion

Medical education and research topics are most favored by the faculties of the College of Medicine at Qassim University. Workshops are the most preferred method of learning. Newer faculty members have lower preference for medical education seminars, which are used to introduce a system of education unfamiliar to them. We also conclude that, incentives to participate in faculty development activities are needed, and these activities should include more interactive and interesting sessions that are considered useful by the staff.

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