



Anatomy success for medical students

Tuesday 26 June, 2012

Medical students' anatomy scores have more than doubled as a result of Team Based Learning (TBL) at the Sydney Medical School, an article in the latest issue of the *ANZ Journal of Surgery* has reported.

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons welcomed the article's findings, having long decried the fact that medical students no longer have adequate exposure to effective anatomy training.

Senior medical students all responded positively to the re-introduction of Anatomy by Whole Body Dissection at the University of Sydney.

"While the effectiveness of teaching human topographical anatomy by groups of medical students carrying out embalmed cadaver dissections has been recognised for centuries, the mechanisms by which this teaching is so effective have not been well described," the article's co-author, Professor George Ramsey-Stewart said.

In the 2011 program, 42 stage three senior medical students participated in a 34-day dissection elective over 7 weeks. This allowed for a possible maximum presence of 272 hours in the dissection room for participants. The program was notable for its application of TBL principles. The students were split into small groups of five or six and assigned a cadaver to each group.

"There was a compelling difference in scores between pre-course and post-course tests, indicating a significant increase in and retention of topographical anatomical knowledge," Professor Ramsey-Stewart said.

The median pre-course score was 9/20, while the post-course score was more than 19/20. There was near universal agreement by students that the five key principles of TBL (small groups, instructor selected allocation to groups, regular assessments, inter- and intra-group competitiveness and prescribed out of class preparation) contributed to their learning.

Aimed at students interested in a surgical career, the course was led *pro-bono* by surgical trainees and specialist surgeons who acted as demonstrators and facilitators for the course, and who were instructed to emphasise clinical applications.

"The use of the TBL method within the dissecting room has provided an effective learning tool for students, and has now been introduced for postgraduates in their whole body dissection course as part of the Master of Surgery degree at the University of Sydney," Professor Ramsey-Stewart said.

The *ANZ Journal of Surgery*, now in its 80th year and published by Wiley-Blackwell, is the pre-eminent surgical journal published in Australia, New Zealand and the South-East Asian region. The Journal is dedicated to the promotion of outstanding surgical practice, and research of contemporary and international interest.



**Media inquiries: Bridget Hooper, Media & Public Relations Officer
0437 008 891 or (03) 9276 7430**