Crossword puzzle: A novel teaching-learning method

Sir,
I read with interest the article on crossword puzzle (G. Sivagnanam, M. Rajasekaran, C. Jayashree, R. Sreepriya, R. Rajakannu. Crossword puzzle: A novel teaching-learning method. Indian J Pharmacol 2004;36:179-80) and I would like to comment on it:

1. The title is misleading as the knowledge of the student has not been evaluated, so how can one conclude that it is a novel teaching learning method (TLM).

2. The objectives mentioned were to gauge the interest among the students and to test the knowledge of the relevant system in pharmacology. However, nowhere in this article was the knowledge of the students evaluated. What is described in the article is the feedback from the students related to the usefulness of the TLM and the level of difficulty of the questions but how much the students have learnt is not evaluated. In this study the conclusion lacks support i.e. on what basis do the authors conclude that it is a novel TLM?

3. In fact it would be better
   (a) to compare this (crossword puzzle) TLM with other standard TLMs.
   (b) to comparatively evaluate the knowledge of the students gained by the two methods with the help of MCQs or any other equivalent method for objective assessment.
   (c) to clarify whether the crossword puzzle as a method of evaluation can be compared with evaluation by MCQ test.
   (d) to record students' feedback as an additional parameter using a viewpoint questionnaire (grading can be poor, average, good and excellent) so as to make the study meaningful and relevant.

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Reply

Sir,
We thank S.K. Srivastava for his interest in our article and comments. Our explanations to his comments are given here:

1. It is pointed out that the title is misleading “as the knowledge of student has not been evaluated” - As regards the word ‘knowledge’ we have reproduced the Merriam-Webster’s dictionary meaning. We think we need not elaborate further on this point since we can’t think of a more apt title. The relevant ‘knowledge’ of the students was assessed only after completion of the concerned topic e.g. General Pharmacology. Novel because, as per our information, such a method has not been tested earlier.

2. The dictionary statement for ‘knowledge’: “the fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association (2): acquaintance with or understanding of a science, art, or technique b (1): the fact or condition of being aware of something (2): the range of one’s information or understanding”

3. It would be better “If this (crossword puzzle) TLM was compared with other standard TLMs”. Agreed, but our intention was not to compare our method with standard procedures nor do we claim that ours is the sole or superior TLMs. The fact that it was not compared with a standard procedure doesn’t mean that our method is ‘irrelevant’ or ‘meaningless’. But we agree that such a comparison would have added strength.

4. “Whether the crossword puzzle as a method of evaluation can be compared with evaluation by MCQ test”. A good idea but each method has its own advantages and limitations.

5. Further, we have not claimed it as an ‘Evaluation’ method despite the fact that the TLM involves assessment of knowledge. Our main purpose was to gauge the interest evoked by this method among the students and testing the ‘knowledge’ was secondary.

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Students’ opinion on prevailing teaching methods in pharmacology and changes recommended

Sir,
This is related with the above article (Indian J Pharmacol 2004;36:155-8) published under the category of research paper. On reading this paper, we could not avoid the temptation