

# Students' Perception of Problem-based Learning in the Medical Curriculum of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Problem-based learning (PBL) is used as an instructional method in the system-based modules of the new innovative curriculum of the Colombo Medical Faculty in Sri Lanka. This study was undertaken to assess whether objectives of having PBL to facilitate acquisition of desirable learning skills and generic skills had been achieved. The perceived advantages and disadvantages of PBL were also studied. **Materials and Methods:** The study population comprised third year medical students who had completed 12 PBL sessions. A self-administered questionnaire, which measured learning outcomes and acquisition of generic skills on a 5-point Likert rating scale, was used. **Results:** The response rate was 87.2% (n = 188). Eighty per cent of students were aware of the rationale for having PBL and of learning from recommended material. Seventy-five per cent knew the competencies that could be acquired from PBL and two-thirds knew about the importance of small group discussions. PBL had helped to improve communication skills in 57% and problem solving skills in 52%. The main disadvantage was that it was time-consuming. Only 46.6% were satisfied with the participation of colleagues in the group. Seventy-six per cent felt that PBL could be better conducted. **Conclusion:** Awareness of concepts of PBL, reasons for its inclusion in the curriculum and educational advantage was high. The main disadvantage perceived was that it was time-consuming. There is a need to improve the conduct of PBL and, provide guidance and awareness programme for students.

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**Key words:** Generic skills, Learning skills, Tutor guidance, Undergraduate learning

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