



COVID & the Curriculum: Faculty Perspectives

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Adapting Curriculum to the Integrated National Board Dental Examination

by



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The COVID-19 pandemic affected the way we teach dental students at NYU Dentistry. Prior to the shut-down, we had created “Body and Disease,” a course designed for second-year students. This full-year course was borne out of the need to revise and revitalize the curriculum by integrating anatomy, physiology, pathophysiology, and pharmacology, with their dental implications for the management of dental patients. By merging basic science concepts with key elements of dental medicine, we aimed to deliver foundational knowledge in a new way for our students with the goals of improving their retention of concepts vital to patient care while also preparing them to succeed on the new Integrated National Board Dental Examination (INBDE).

We created this course specifically to provide content in a variety of ways to capture students' different

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learning styles. This included in-person lectures from expert faculty both within and outside of the College, small group case discussions led by faculty who were trained and calibrated, and high stakes in-person examinations distributed throughout the course.

“Body and Disease” presented many challenges for us as course designers including creating a lecture, case discussion, and examination schedule that was based on body system rather than discipline, identifying key faculty members to deliver content in an integrated fashion that is new and different, and aligning students’ schedules with their other required courses. Add to that a global pandemic with a school-wide shut down and we had to think quickly and strategically to modify our course, which students would be exposed to for the first time, while maintaining our educational standards. Using Zoom for the first time was a challenge for all of us and we had to be sure that invited faculty were comfortable delivering the course material and answering students’ questions remotely. The biggest challenges were in managing students’ questions; the webinar format allowed us more easily to monitor students’ live feedback and record the presentations for future use.

As faculty know, the first iteration of a course often sets the tone for how it is perceived by students in future years. Course evaluations and review by the Curriculum Committee also help to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses that can be improved upon when a course is conducted again. The pandemic forced us to think outside the box and become creative in our delivery of educational content and assessment of students while still maintaining our strong commitment to the material presented. We transformed our plan for small group discussions into webinars and included polls to increase active learning and participation. We modified our approach and overall, the course was very well received by students and faculty. Students performed well on the course’s examinations, and we anticipate, given the knowledge gained from “Body and Disease,” that they will function at a high level on the INBDE.

Now, in its second year, we can point to several lessons learned. First, whether core content is delivered in person or remotely, students can learn and achieve educational milestones regardless of the method. Second, engagement by webinar is possible and can be fun as we learn to use technology in new ways. Third, integrating dentistry and medicine is necessary as we continue to best prepare our students to be productive on future examinations and successful in clinical practice. “Body and Disease” will continue to evolve, and we look forward to what is yet to come.

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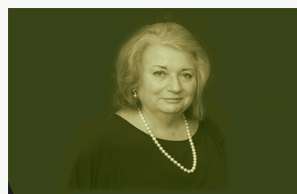
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**Message from Dean
Charles N. Bertolami**



**A Note from the JADE
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