

CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES

ASSIGNMENT 1 REFLECTIONS ON LEARNING

REFLECTION 1: ONLINE SIMULATION WORKSHOP OF AN EXPERT PANEL MEETING

DESCRIPTION

For the second day of the clinical practice guideline (CPG) module the class participated in an online simulation workshop of an expert panel meeting. We were each given titles of experts that we were going to simulate and contribute to as panel experts.

Dr Emmanuel Effa offered his expertise on the session for 'Overview of GRADE 'as part of GHO PrEP Guideline development which focused on the 'Evidence to Decision' framework. The session was delivered within the context of a guideline development / expert panel meeting. Hence, we were given theoretical knowledge of the subject together with a practical class simulation wherein to apply these fundamental principles.

The topic of the guideline under discussion was '**Pre-exposure prophylaxis for people at risk of HIV**'. My 'persona' for the meeting was **Programme Manager, NDoH Ukraine HIV/AIDS Department of Health Service and Provision**. Further to this and in addition to my experience in this field, I was asked to stimulate the panel discussion with the following comments '**There is an implementation issue - you believe there is lack of familiarity with PrEP prescribing which could affect implementation.**' We were also encouraged to 'dress up' or display appropriate props that we thought might add character to our role. At the start of the session, each member of the panel was required to introduce themselves, their role and affiliation, and to declare any conflict of interest as is the process at the beginning of such meetings.

FEELINGS

I felt excited about this simulation or 'role-play' and also very nervous at the same time. I was excited because this was an opportunity for me to be exposed to a session that I have not experienced before which was actually the 'heart' of this module and therefore, to be getting a chance to learn and experience a live simulation of a panel discussion.

However, I felt really nervous as well. I started to feel nervous from the moment that I received the email regarding my role in the expert panel the day before. I was unsure of exactly what was expected of me, what depth of knowledge was required, what to prepare, how to prepare and how to present myself. This feeling of nervousness continued all throughout the night before, the day of the session and until about midway into the session. I also felt a bit relieved since the topic about PrEP was actually something that I am familiar with. Since this was only the second day of class, I was also quite aware that I was not exactly familiar with all of my class mates and this made me feel more nervous as well as self-conscious.

I decided to push past the nervousness and to embrace the new experience and learning opportunity that we were about to experience and to fully submerge myself in the experience. After the session, I felt elated (at having survived the session), relieved as well as grateful for a successful and constructive session.

This was an exhilarating experience that left me feeling satisfied and fulfilled at being a part of a bigger process. I had the opportunity to apply my knowledge and experience, critically evaluate evidence that was presented, debate with colleagues, share knowledge and to experience the simulation in its entirety.

However, I also felt mentally exhausted and drained. I needed to rest my mind and to have a much needed debrief session.

EVALUATION

Overall, this was a constructive experience. The idea behind having a simulation session was for students to experience an actual guideline expert panel meeting (similar to a 'moot court' proceedings in a school of law). I feel that the success of the session hinged on active participation from the class. Hence, the session could have been unsuccessful if there were no or minimal active participation. Our class session however was successful as there were active participation from the panelists in general.

Whereas the session drew on our experiences and participation, I feel that there was a lack of structure to the session. This could have been due to the time constraints that we had for the session. This prompted some panel members to be more active in the discussion than others. Perhaps if each member had an allocated slot, this may have ensured equal participation which is essential to the success of such a meeting. I enjoyed the opportunity to give and receive constructive feedback and input from the fellow panelists. The adjudicator of the panel was interactive and guiding with the process.

However, I feel that we or rather I was not very well briefed on what to expect for the session. Perhaps some prior guidance on the exact proceedings would have helped me to better mentally prepare and help ease me into the simulation.

As mentioned, after the session, I greatly needed a debrief session which we did not actually have. I feel that this was an omission of an opportunity for myself and the class to learn more. A debrief session would have really amplified the experience for the class. This would have helped us make sense of the experience and to iron out any doubts or clarifications regarding the actual panel experience.

ANALYSIS

This entire process was a learning opportunity for me and I got to gain an experience on something that I have not experienced before. I believe that this was something that cannot be formally taught in a lecture using slides or even through discussions. Therefore a simulation is perhaps the best way to help students understand this process of guideline development.

All throughout the process, I was unconsciously and consciously absorbing the experience, the information, interactions and the process. I was intuitively building a tangible process mentally that I will refer to and use in the future. Although I tried to make notes of learning points and discussions during the actual simulation, I believe that a lot of the learning experience came from the actual experience of participating in the process and interacting with other panel members. I tried to use the context of our discussion together with the interaction of the other panelists to develop a mental picture of what exactly a real-life expert panel meeting would entail. I also tried to draw on what the other members were saying keeping their 'personas' in context.

The process of debating a point as well as the process of critically evaluating the presented evidence was most stimulating aspect of the process for me. I feel that I learned the most from these two aspects. I also realized that in order to successfully and constructively contribute to such a meeting, one would need to be a real 'expert' in the chosen field. This for me entails being well learned, experienced, active and up to date with current knowledge base. I will use this introspection to guide me to being a better 'expert panelist' in the future.

CONCLUSIONS (GENERAL AND SPECIFIC)

This process was new for me. I have not participated in such a forum previously. This simulation was eye-opening and challenged my existing beliefs on expert panel meetings and the guideline development process.

My previous perception on the expert panel guideline meeting was that the process was a straight-forward, formal process of panelists presenting their expert opinions, interpretation of evidence and underlining their individual recommendations. Hence, viewing the process from an internal perspective was fruitful. This was especially true about the constructive evaluation of evidence, debating of viewpoints, being adjudicated by a chair-person and the voting process leading to a final agreement or consensus.

I realized that the process was far more intense, requiring active participation, constructive debate, with complex thought process taking on global views about the discussion topic. The resulting consensus was hence based on application of collective knowledge, experience, expertise and a rigorously formulated and governed process. This knowledge and experience was missing from my perception of such a process.

Going forward, I now have gained this experience and insight, which I hope will be the first of many. This new found experience will guide my understanding, perception and appreciation of a guideline every time I use or refer to one. I will be a better end-user of guidelines and more importantly, I hope to be an effective contributor to a guideline development process in the future.

PERSONAL ACTION PLANS

Absorbing the knowledge from this lesson, I decided to explore further on the guideline development process and expert panel discussions. This session obviously had a positive impression on me. I knew at the end of the session that a personal/professional ambition of mine would be to aspire to be a panelist on a guideline development committee someday perhaps (Global HIV prevention strategy panel). I rather enjoyed the simulated experience of meeting with experts from the various avenues surrounding a discussion point, exchange of information and views, review of evidence, debating, constructive intervention, dissolution of inaccurate information and finally reaching a consensus. For me, this was a productive, structured and methodical approach to developing a guideline.

I spent the rest of the day pondering and the next day re-living the experience. I reflected on my own participation and thought about how I could improve my contribution the next time I engaged in such an activity. Now that I know what the process entails, I will make sure to be better prepared with more reading and research on the relevant topic. The next time that I get an opportunity to participate in an expert panel, I will endeavour to be better prepared, to be a more active participant, to actively learn more, to share more knowledge, actively debate on points that I do not agree with or ask for clarity on points that are unclear. I will ensure that I am more than adequately satisfied with all responses and evidence so that I am confident enough to reach a constructive consensus.

This session has also opened my mind to the guideline development process. I can now better visualise the working of the panel as a group which deepens my existing knowledge. By participating in this forum, I now have a broader knowledge, experience, respect and appreciation of this process. I anticipate that this will be of great value to me in my professional future.

I also realized that since we were an online class, it can sometimes be more daunting to speak up in class and ask questions. We were still getting to know each other online, and hence, the online platform could sometimes pose a barrier. I decided that I needed to brave this feeling and be more confident in class. This was a learning process after all and we were all here to learn, share and grow together.