

Medical Education

# Independent Extracurricular Work as a Means of Improving Knowledge of Fifth Year Students of Medicine Faculty at the Department of Oncology

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## Abstract

Independent extracurricular work of fifth-year students of Medicine Faculty at the Department of Oncology in the context of credit-modular system of education was analyzed. The problem of proper organization of independent theoretical and practical student's work was determined. The presence of sufficient amount of relevant literature and resource materials for student's training was analyzed.

## Keywords

independent extracurricular work; Medicine Faculty; the Department of Oncology

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## Problem statement and analysis of the recent research

Central area of focus for qualified specialists' training at the modern stage of medicine development is education quality improvement, specialists' ability to apply the acquired knowledge and skills into practice. This requires changes in approaches to learning, acquiring professional abilities and skills, and the ability to apply the gained knowledge in accordance with the demand of practical healthcare. Today, cancer ranks second in the structure of morbidity. Therefore, the success of future doctors' training depends on many factors. One of them is students' independent extracurricular work (IEW).

The objective of the research was to improve the knowledge of fifth-year students of Medicine Faculty by means of independent extracurricular work.

## Results and their discussion

At the Department of Oncology independent extracurricular work (IEW) is closely connected with the knowledge gained at the theoretical departments. Students of Medicine Faculty are aimed at the systematization and perception of learning material. This makes students use the gained knowledge and skills to solve complex clinical cases. Students' learning outcomes and their future practice activities largely depend on IEW organization. Students' IEW is a very broad concept. Different approaches have been formed for its interpretation due to differences in understanding of this phenomenon [1, 2].

Independent work is often regarded as a separate type of

academic studies in addition to lectures, practical classes, etc. IEW involves the entire active mental activity of the students in the learning process, is the internal base of interconnection of various types and forms of classes. Considering IEW as the main method of knowledge acquisition, proponents of this approach argue that it encompasses cognitive activity performed by students both in extracurricular way and at the lectures, practical classes and in training centers. That is, in accordance with this point of view, independent work encompasses all types and forms of educational process [1].

IEW is, by definition, an active mental activity of the student related to the performance of educational tasks. The existence of objectives and goals for its performance are considered to be the characteristics of independent work. The student faces the tasks in learning activity relevant to its fields [2, 3, 5]:

- retention of the topic material presented during the lecture (working with lecture notes, recommended literature);
- making notes of fundamental works in accordance with the curriculum at the Department of Oncology;
- participation in clinical rounds, discussions, consultations.

All of these elements of the educational process constitute IEW, as students perform them individually to a certain extent, in extracurricular time.

Independent work on the performance of class assignment comprises three stages.

1. Preparing the student for the assignment, theoretical, psychological, organizational and methodological, equipment and logistical support of independent work. Student's theoretical readiness consists in his intellectual competence i.e. the ability to apply his knowledge to solve the problem.

Practical readiness is the ability to optimally plan independent work, skillfully use lecture notes, textbooks, manuals, computer, intellectual operations (analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization, classification, etc.).

Psychological readiness of a student implies the presence of his motives to the performance of a specific task. In order for the task given to a student to become the motive of his intellectual, practical activity, it should be perceived by him. The internal perception of the problem begins with the actualization of a motive that encourages the student to perform the task, and accordingly, to organize IEW.

The success of the preparatory stage depends on organizational, methodological, equipment and logistical support of students' IEW (availability of literature sources, guidelines, teaching aids, information and computer base, etc.).

2. Fulfillment of the assignment. This is the most important and responsible stage of students' IEW. Since the assignment is most often in the educational-cognitive form, all mental processes providing cognitive activity such as sensation, perception, imagination, memory, thinking, attention, etc. are involved in the process of its fulfillment. Such personal qualities as purposefulness, persistence, responsibility and so on influence the efficiency of assignment fulfillment.
3. Analysis of the completed assignment is the final stage of IEW. During the analysis, the student evaluates (by means of self-control, sometimes mutual control) the quality and duration of assignment fulfillment, the efficiency of methods and means used in the process of independent work.

Teacher guidance significantly influences the efficiency of students' IEW. It includes:

- planning of students' IEW;
- formation of students' needs and motives to active IEW;
- teaching fundamentals of independent work to students;
- control of assignments fulfillment.

The formation of students' needs and motives to active IEW occurs due to teacher's encouragement (order or strict requirement). This method is not efficient because the activity is ineffective if it does not cause professional interest. The

development of cognitive interest in Oncology, the process of its mastering is more effective way of the formation of students' needs and motives to IEW. The activity based on a deep interest not only in the result but also in its procedural components is the most productive since the person derives the greatest pleasure from it. In this case the student himself finds time for the subject of Oncology. Understandably, the teacher must arouse students' interest in the academic discipline, its content [3].

IEW promotes the formation of students' intellectual qualities necessary for a future specialist. It develops students' sustainable skills in constant enriching of knowledge, self-education, promotes the development of diligence, discipline and initiative, experiences students' possibilities, will, discipline, etc.

Students have the opportunity to use their individual abilities better in the process of IEW. They study, make notes of different scientific sources, re-read their specific sections, paragraphs if necessary, consult relevant reference books, atlases. All this contributes to deep comprehension of the learning material, develops students' purposefulness in knowledge gaining, independent thinking. IEW provides educational impact on students contributing to the formation and development of the necessary moral qualities [3, 5].

The organization and methods of students' IEW should meet certain requirements:

1. development of students' motivational orientation. A condition for any purposeful activity is the orientation, namely readiness for a specific activity which directly depends on the presence of human needs and on the objective situation to meet this need. Orientation significantly influences the nature and results of students' activity, improves the effectiveness of action, stimulates thinking, memory, makes perception more accurate and attention more focused, more directed to the object of cognition. Therefore, the student should develop an inner need for continued independent work.
2. systematic nature and continuity. A long interruption in work with the learning material affects knowledge assimilation, causes loss of logical connection with the previously studied material. Unsystematic nature of IEW makes achievement of high results in training impossible.
3. consistency in the work. Consistency means a strict order, the sequence of work stages. The scattered and unsystematic reading causes superficial knowledge and makes retention of the read material impossible.
4. proper planning of independent work, efficient use of time. Clear plan will help to structure the independent work efficiently and focus on key points.
5. the use of appropriate methods, means and procedures. Many students work with the material incorrectly. They

read the text and make notes at once trying to remember what they have read. This approach ignores the most important element of independent work, namely a deep understanding of the material. This leads to the fact that the students learn it superficially. It is difficult for them to put a theory into practice to the full extent. They form a bad habit not to think but to remember. This also negatively influences learning outcomes.

6. Teachers' guidance. The main forms of students' IEW management are determination of the syllabus requirements for the study of academic disciplines; guidance of students in the reference list; individual and group consultations; organization of special classes in the methodology for the study of scientific and educational literature, methods of making notes; preparation of courseware, recommendations, mental notes and so on.

Training of students' skills in independent work with educational material, scientific literature and courseware is among the priorities of higher education institutions. Students also develop self-discipline, consistency, businesslike character, concentration necessary in the future professional activities. The rational planning of independent work is very important for a student in case of significant study load and lack of time. A plan helps to allocate time and efficiently use it. Substantiation of amount, scope, sequence of work in the course of certain time provides a sense of purpose, creative nature of the work [2, 4].

Student's efficient planning of the study depends on adherence to such preconditions:

1. The ability to distinguish the important one from the unimportant one in IEW. First of all the student should focus on the mastering of the main material planning his time for this.
2. The focus of all attention, physical and moral strength, thoughts and aspirations on studying.
3. The purposefulness and rationality of IEW assignments fulfillment.

The use of time allowed for independent work is a student's private matter. It is good when the student produces his own style taking scientific organization of labor as a basis. Knowledge of computer competence fundamentals, bibliographies, a system of compulsory literature provision and ability to work with it contribute to saving of time.

Thus, the need for effective IEW organization is caused by high requirements to the level of future specialists training for their competent beginning of work at the medical labor market with well-established needs for constant professional self-education and self-development.

## Conclusions

Independent extracurricular work of fifth-year students of Medicine Faculty at the Department of Oncology provides

theoretical training from previous courses and practical work on material retention combining cooperation of a student and a teacher, methodological and visual support with the use of modern information technologies. As a result of IEW students demonstrate the ability to present the obtained knowledge in an accessible form for a wide range of students in the form of writing and defending research paper.

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