

## Reflective Practices: Importance for Medical Students

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**“Reflection is the instrument by which experiences are translated into dynamic knowledge”<sup>1</sup>**

Reflective writing is considered as a component of modern healthcare practices. It is a vital part of continuing professional development and is currently encouraged by educational institutions and healthcare professionals.<sup>2</sup> Reflective practices mean to mentally wander through where we have been and to try to make some sense out of it. The ability to become reflective in practice has become a necessary skill for health professionals.<sup>3</sup>

Reflection is considered as one of the most useful learning experiences. It is a process of “learning to learn,” it must be taught for better future professionals, and cannot be left to develop on its own. Written reflections are helpful for learners to integrate new learning into their skills and knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Being reflective can help learners to integrate the effective perspective of learning explicitly and create a favorable environment for clinical learning. In such type of conducive environment, numerous aspects of professional roles could be learned and experienced. Eventually, it may lead to better and more comprehensive decision-making of ill-defined and complicated problems.<sup>5</sup>

Most commonly, reflections can be on thoughts, experiences, and emotions. Reflection is widely assumed to include one’s relationship to both the inner and outer worlds. It’s all about surprise, doubt, and thinking outside the box. Emotions play an important role.<sup>6</sup>

The learner may become aware of their experiences while practicing reflection to gain a deeper understanding. Reflective writings are recommended as an effective method for developing critical thinking and learning.<sup>7</sup> It helps in the development of self-expression and broadening one’s vision as it breaks the whole experience into smaller and understandable

chunks. Thereby, adding depth and breadth to the learning for the achievement of personal development goals.<sup>1</sup>

Improvement of traditional medical teaching including the latest assessment strategies & reflection practices would result in a better outcome. This approach may eventually bring up future professionals, who are more capable to meet the challenges in daily patient care. Health professionals commonly encounter diverse patient scenarios in clinics, that can be very simple or complicated and the attribute of being reflective may lead to critical thinking, which leads to an appropriate clinical judgment. Developing the ability to reflect has been documented as a vital component of the training of professional development. In-depth analysis for reflective writing links students’ experience-based learning and exploration of their professional identities.<sup>8</sup>

The emotions related to an experience are the stimulus for the new learning to occur. Reflective writing is fostering the student’s aptitude for being observant and empowers them to think about the facts relevant to daily practice. As a result, students will be able to shape and update their knowledge regularly, and reflective writing can be used as a strategy for evaluating learning and identifying challenges associated with experiences that may ultimately harness their learning experience.<sup>9</sup>

Being professionally competent means one should hold many attributes; e.g., the use of appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, communication skills, self-reflection, and clinical reasoning.<sup>1</sup> The reflective professionals are ones, who are capable of being thoughtful and considering their acts carefully, to make an appropriate clinical judgment. Health professional graduates must be competent in their procedural skills and also capable of being reflective, which helps to develop critical thinking to make appropriate clinical decisions.<sup>10</sup>

Overcoming hesitation to express their thoughts regarding clinical experiences and putting those in reflection writing is difficult for some students. Another hurdle for the students is language difficulties, which restrict them to express their thoughts in words precisely.<sup>6</sup> So, self-reflection can help students in many ways and have a significant impact on their learning.<sup>11</sup>

It is documented that guiding students’ reflective writing in the work-based situation using a reflective

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model can be helpful to be proactive towards their learning and development of clinical skills. It will eventually transform learning and build a framework for new experiences. Teaching reflective journal writing could help students to identify their learning needs, as it supports learning from experience.<sup>12</sup> A facilitator can bring an interest in students to assess and analyze their actions systematically as well as critically and formulate alternative actions at the workplace. Reflective writing has a crucial role in fostering reasoning and analysis skills. Furthermore, the ability to reflect on one's performance is an important skill for professional & personal development.<sup>13</sup>

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