For 20 years there has been a push to integrate the basic and clinical sciences in medical school curricula. Recently, studies have found that compared to students who received separate notes, those who received integrated notes were better able to recall and understand concepts related to both basic science and clinical material. This suggests that integrated resources may provide students with enhanced learning opportunities.

Methods

The study was based on an experimental design developed by Kulasegaram et al. (2015) and was approved by the ORR IRB. Participants in the study were recruited from the first-year medical student class. The students were asked to complete a survey on their perceptions of integrated vs separate resources and basic science and clinical material before they were randomly assigned to one of two experimental groups. The average ORN grade between the two groups was not significantly different.

Students in each experimental group were given a written resource about related clinical disorders associated with the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, where the resource either had a basic science or clinical science focus. The resource was designed to test knowledge and understanding of the clinical aspects of the disorder. Students were then asked to rate the resources using a 4-point rating scale of 0 (not helpful) to 3 (very helpful) on a number of factors including how useful it was for understanding both basic science and clinical material related to the disorder. The students were also asked to rate the resources on the basis of notes that were either type of resource.

Results and Conclusions

There were no significant differences between the groups regarding the quantity of type of notes they took. The ratings of notes in the INT group demonstrated a trend between the basic science and clinical material focused notes in each group and assessed the same concepts, perhaps integrated thought processes.

Conclusion

Our study suggests that the type of resources can influence the type of note-taking done by students, and that the process of taking integrated notes can enhance learning and retention. This is a pilot study and is limited by its small sample size. Additional research is planned to confirm and expand on these results.

References
