



## The implementation of unique, active learning tools in post-graduate training

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### Dear Editor

I read the prospective study by Patrick et al., *The Usefulness of Crossword Puzzle as a Self-Learning Tool in Pharmacology* (1), with great interest.

“Crossword puzzles provide expansion of vocabulary, stimulate thinking capacity, boost confidence, and fasten up the learning capacity; hence, the present study was conducted to investigate the usefulness of crossword puzzle as an innovative self-learning tool in pharmacology (1).”

The authors’ initial point of contention and hypothesis that drove their study of medical students and their ability to learn organ-based pharmacology is definitively true. I could not agree more that crossword puzzles provide a unique, interactive outlet for active learning: “75.5% of the students had an enjoyable experience and the majority of them agreed that it helped them enhance their knowledge of drugs, remember diseases and drug names, and overall learn about the topic. They were also of the opinion that this should be inculcated in pharmacology curriculum. Incorporation of crossword puzzles, as an adjunct tool, was useful as the majority of the students reported that this improved their attitude of learning, thereby improving their performance (1).”

Reading the authors’ study and their positive results compelled me to write this letter as I too have had positive experiences with this active learning tool during my post-graduate medical training as an anesthesiology resident. As a first-year anesthesiology resident, the learning curve in the operating room was very high and in our free time we were expected to read anesthesiology textbooks in order to learn, memorize, and understand the fundamental concepts of anesthesiology. One of our attending physicians, in lieu of a traditional talking lecture during our weekly resident didactic sessions, instead handed out a crossword puzzle on her assigned topic of “Fundamentals of Obstetric Anesthesiology (2)”. I and my fellow co-residents found that we were able to work through this crossword puzzle in an active and engaging manner that was met with even more interest and excitement given that it was completely different from a more traditional lecture where the teacher would stand in front of the group of learners and speak at length on a specific topic.

There was such a positive response that we requested more crossword puzzles on several more important concepts including local anesthetics, volatile anesthetics, intravenous anesthetics, neurological anesthesia, cardiac anesthesia, critical care, pain medicine, and operating room safety.

Our group of residents had such a great response to doing these crossword puzzles throughout our first year of anesthesiology residency that we felt extremely prepared for our in-training exam and actually implemented the crossword puzzles into the first-year didactic curriculum for subsequent residency classes behind us.

I would like to thank the authors for their study and I strongly believe that this is a unique, underutilized active learning tool that can be used at various stages of medical training from pre-medical courses, to medical school, and through

to post-graduate training.

**Conflict of Interest:** None declared.

### References

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2. Wright J, Simpao AF, Viswanath O. Basic Principles of Obstetric Anesthesiology: A Crossword Puzzle. *J Clin Diagn Res.* 2017;11(7):U001-2.