Reduce the use of ‘super-notes’ and increase clinical reasoning in 1st and 2nd year medical students to aid the progression towards a tutor-less learning environment

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Introduction/background:
Increasing numbers of medical schools in Australia and overseas have embraced Problem Based Learning (PBL) to address the need to improve the clinical reasoning skills and communication skills as well as to encourage self-directed lifelong learning of medical graduates. At Griffith, PBL has utilised e-learning as a tool to deliver curriculum elements and monitor the curriculum and student progress. It has not replaced regular contact and interaction with teaching staff (Tedman, Alexander and Loudon, 2007). The Griffith MBBS program graduated its first cohort of students in December, 2008. Like other PBL curricula, students in years 1 and 2 gain access to notes from earlier cohorts and some students depend solely on these notes at report-back time in PBL sessions, while other students attempt to cut and paste information from reading materials, without synthesising the material. Krasne and Wilkerson (2008) found that students, who struggle academically, seek out longer study time by ineffectively embracing the concept of problem based learning through the use of a “cut and paste” approach to report back sessions.

Purpose/objectives:
This presentation will report the result of a pilot study using the basics learned from both the presentation delivered by Krasne and Wilkerson (2008) and the workshop undertaken with Wilkerson, Krasne and Stevens (2008), and changing it to:

a) suit the Griffith MBBS Curriculum,
b) develop clinical reasoning skills to a higher level,
c) progress towards the elimination of the use of “super notes” handed down from students in previous year levels, and
d) assist in the development of a tutorless learning environment.

Issues for exploration/ideas for discussion:

• How important is the report back process for developing clinical reasoning skills and teamwork?
• How important is inter-student interaction/communication between PBL sessions for developing teamwork and improving student collaboration and involvement in the PBL process?
• What are the most important skills that students need to acquire in preparation for a tutorless learning environment?