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**Title:** Cooperative learning as compared with lecture method in students learning; implications for medical and community health education

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**Abstract:** Introduction: Traditional teaching models, which are often based on lecturing, are associated with numerous challenges and constraints. Among them, quickly forgetting the instructional content, weakness in the transfer of learning by learners, inadequate training for self-directed learning, which is very important and necessary in the era of information explosion, can be counted on. Evidence shows that cooperative learning approaches are suitable alternatives and at least useful complementary methods in response to these issues and challenges. This issue is not limited to educational programs running in schools and universities, but also is an issue of worthy consideration in the field of community health education. The purpose of this study was to compare the impacts of two methods of lecturing and cooperative learning on student learning.

**Methods:** In this quasi – experimental study, a group of undergraduate students in the field of nutrition (n=32), were randomly assigned to experimental (n=14) and control groups (n=18). Control group received their course through traditional lecturing method, while cooperative learning methods was carried out for the experimental group. In the latter group, two students were trained by teachers, and then they should teach the course content to their counterparts. A test, running in three phases, before, immediately after and two months after the intervention, was carried out to measure student knowledge. Paired t-test and independent t-test were mainly used for statistical analysis purposes.

**Results:** The findings, through comparing pre and post test means of scores, showed that learners' knowledge has been improved significantly in both experimental and comparison groups (p<0.05). 67% of students in the cooperative learning method and 42% of students in the lecture method have learned the lesson content at satisfactory levels. Comparing means of knowledge scores between two groups, measured in the third phase - i.e. two months after the intervention - showed a significant difference between the two groups (P<0.05). In other word, among those who have learned satisfactorily in both groups, a greater percentage (91%) of the experimental group and a lower percentage (54%) of the comparison group were able to recall more content of the lesson.

**Conclusion:** In spite of some limitations of this study, the results confirm that cooperative learning method is more effective that lecture on students' knowledge. In addition, this study suggest more research for evidence-based changes in educational approaches in the fields of medical and community health education programs.

**Key words:** cooperative learning, lecture, knowledge, medical education, community health education.

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