

Centre for Medical education Technology
All India Institute of Medical Sciences Bhopal

breaking patterns, creating change

Theatre of the oppressed workshop

CMET of AIIMS Bhopal organized a medical humanities workshop in Theatre of the oppressed called breaking patterns creating change *for* students of 2012 batch on 19th and 20th September 2015. Forty five students attended the workshop.



More about Theatre of the Oppressed

Created by the Brazilian theatre legend and visionary Augusto Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) is a form of theatre that is used worldwide for community education. Using a wide arsenal of theatre games and exercises, it helps build community, and deepens our understanding of



ourselves and others. Spectators are turned into *spect-actors* in interactive, problem-solving theatrical structures such as Forum Theatre. TO starts a process of dialogue, reflection and action, and promotes critical thinking.



In the Indian context students have to shut out all 'distractions', and focus on bookish preparation for exams for several years, in order to obtain a seat in a medical college. Their development as caring and sensitive human beings is deeply impacted by this. During their years of medical training, emotions and feelings again take a beating, as the need to appear strong and 'in control' is stressed, and a doctor's vulnerabilities are not

acknowledged. As a refuge from the stresses of medical training, young doctors-to-be often retreat behind 'know-it-all' masks, or develop an indifference to suffering and pain. A student, intern or resident doctor, who probably came into the profession with idealistic dreams, becomes completely mechanised with OPDs and ward rounds degenerating into a painful chore rather than the deep and intense learning process that they can be.

The workshop helped students to *demechanise* themselves, and



rediscover their potential to be human beings, fully engaging with the world around us. The workshop used games and exercises and theater to encourage students to put their bodies to work, and in a fun way learn & explore themselves and the world around. The games created opportunities to become critical thinkers and problem solvers- in short, to *act*, instead of just talk.

Forum Theatre

On the second day of the workshop the *forum theatre* was organized. The students presented five skits on issues that concern them. The skits addressed the following problems identified by students:



Aisa hai aur aisa hi rahega (Things will stay as they are)

1. This skit highlighted the pressure of set social norms.
2. Blindly following the trends of the society without taking in to consideration of one's own interests.
3. Gender discrimination and stereotyping.

My way or highway

This skit addressed ego in medical profession

1. The students highlighted misuse of power in hierarchy of medical profession which restricts innovation and improvements in the system.
2. Juniors are deprived of opportunities to grow in their profession.
3. This oppressive situation is responsible of valuable brain drain from our country.

Jai Maharashtra

This skit addressed

1. Regionalism ; 2. Bureaucracy ; 3. Prejudiced/Biased behavior- Region, language, community.

Attendance hai to exam hai

The students sought to question

1. Overvalued importance of attendance in curriculum, sometimes harming students.
2. If attendance is optional, quality of teaching might also increase (performance pressure on teachers to maintain

Who's right/who's wrong

1. The skit tries to portray a problem that our society faces ie 'moral policing.

2. Students tried to incorporate all possible responses, an unmarried couple will have face in our country.

This forum theatre was a way to express them. The audience was

encouraged to replace the actors to enact so as to solve the problem being addressed in the skit. Thus making this whole workshop interactive e, thought provoking and directed towards problem solving.



The resource person for the workshop, Dr Radha Ramaswamy has a PhD in theatre research, and received training in Theatre of the Oppressed at the Seattle-based *Mandala Center for Change*. In March 2011, she founded the *Centre for Community Dialogue and Change (CCDC)*, an organization dedicated to promoting the use of Theatre of the Oppressed in India.

The workshop received an overwhelmingly positive response from the participating students.