Communication within the health sciences: an integrated approach for students.

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The health sciences traditionally tend to be science content-orientated and the health science student has to process a large quantity of scientific knowledge.

Communication can be seen as a critical transdisciplinary aspect of the health sciences. Communication is integral to the health science student as it is a vital aspect of their intended profession working within the community. Communication is also important to the health science student as a means of ensuring their ultimate academic success. Areas have been identified that need to be addressed to enhance student teaching and learning and to ensure their academic success. These areas include medium of instruction (MOI) proficiency, the need for the integration of subject content and the language used and the improvement of student academic literacy.

Many students studying in the health sciences in South Africa today are using English as their medium of instruction but it is not their mother tongue. Students also come from varied educational and cultural backgrounds. This paper intends to discuss an integrated approach to communication within the health sciences as adopted by radiography educators. This approach has included a metacurricular aspect where thinking skills, social skills, technology usage and study skills have been intertwined within the content subjects. Learning materials were developed which resulted in a course workbook for first level radiographers that aims to improve MOI proficiency, integrate subject-language content and enhance the academic literacy of the student. Further integration in the form of interdisciplinary projects where common topics are brought together, is explored.