

What Will Happen after Withdrawal of the Candy from the Lecture?

Dear Editor,

In their article titled, “Candy lectures: Can incentive improve the quality of student preparation in clinical lectures?” Kaliyadan and Khan^[1] describe how they used candy as a reward to increase student participation and preparedness in clinical lectures. We would like to challenge this thinking and approach on the basis of self-determination theory (SDT) of motivation.^[2] SDT favors motivation that comes from genuine interest, i.e., intrinsic motivation, rather than motivation that comes from rewards and other external factors, i.e., extrinsic motivation. A review on the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation reported that withdrawal of rewards from an activity that was intrinsically motivating in the first place undermined future intrinsic motivation for the activity.^[3] Are we concentrating on quick wins by offering incentives to students for their participation in lectures and sacrificing the long-term attitude toward lifelong learning and continuing professional development? It would be interesting to investigate the long-term effect of giving out candies; not in terms of participation of the students during the lectures, but in terms of their learning (surface or deep) and retention of knowledge. An autonomy-supportive environment in the lecture which actively engages students in the topic at hand and highlights the relevance of the topic in patient practice,^[4] in our opinion, would serve the purpose even in the absence of candies. In our paper, on how to enhance intrinsic motivation of students in the classroom, we have provided 12 concrete tips including giving importance to what students want, creating a self-determined internal state which guides student behavior, getting the students to participate actively, giving them the responsibility for their learning, structured guidance, optimal challenge, constructive feedback and emotional support, acknowledging feelings of negative affect, showing the relevance of uninteresting activities, providing choices, and employing autonomy-supportive language.^[5]

The million dollar question for all educators is “Do we want to fill the bucket or light the fire?”^[2] in the case of our students.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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