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The impact of cultures on feedback: Perspectives of Sri Lankan clinical teachers

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Introduction: There are cultural differences between the settings described in the literature and Sri Lanka on providing feedback for clinical learning.

Objectives: The objective of this study was to explore the perspective of Sri Lankan clinical teachers on providing feedback to medical students.

Methods: In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with one experienced clinical teacher from each of the five final-year clinical disciplines and from three Sri Lankan medical schools (n=15). The transcriptions of the interviews were analysed using constant comparative approach.

Results: The main features of feedback identified included: **spontaneous unstructured nature** (“..then and there, feedback is given without thinking that it is feedback”); **negative focus** (“I also feel whether we always say you have done this wrong, this wrong, instead of pointing out some good aspects. We may be starting off with the negative aspect. So that may not be as effective as you would like it to be.”); **directness** (“I speak very bluntly to the students...and our students don’t get bullied when I do that. Because it is our culture, we tell it in front....we are more social unit than individuals.”); **presence of a large power gap** (“In our hierarchy, students think that they have a gap between us and students. They are really scared...we need to reduce that gap. But at the same time if you are very close....they don’t do what we say.”).