

## **Exploring integrative assessments for integrated curricula in pharmacy education**

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Much attention is currently focussed on curricular integration in pharmacy education reform in both developed and developing countries. The strategy enables educational experiences to be engaging and relevant to meet changing health care delivery needs. It endeavours to connect and relate diverse disciplines and facilitate higher-order thinking, problem solving and deep understanding through constructivist approaches.

With integrated curricula, horizontal integration across disciplines can be multidisciplinary around a common theme, or interdisciplinary (bringing common and shared understanding around a theme) or transdisciplinary which uses merging disciplines<sup>1</sup>. Vertical integration, on the other hand, demonstrates progression and increasing complexity over time and levels, builds on prior experience and uses real-world contexts and simulations to facilitate learning.

Assessment in previous modular curricula evaluated student understanding by achievement of module learning outcomes. With integrated curricula, as shown in Bruner's spiral curriculum<sup>2</sup>, the assessment of integrative learning and the degree of preparedness for practice must also be considered. The ability to make links between content and disciplines, construct new knowledge with prior experiences, transfer learning to new situations may not be easy and may yield different outcomes for different students.

This study aims to explore various aspects of integrated assessments employed by universities offering integrated pharmacy programmes. The design and implementation of curricula and assessments evaluating integrative learning, the drivers, barriers and support structures will be studied. Data on the views and perceptions of students and educators will also be gathered. The study will also include the newly developed integrated pharmacy programme offered at the Nelson Mandel Metropolitan university in South Africa.

### **References**

1. Marion L. Pearson, and Harry T. Hubball, (2012), REVIEWS: Curricular Integration in Pharmacy Education, American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education 2012; 76 (10) Article 204
2. Bruner, J. S. (1960: revised edition 1977) The Process of Education. London: Harvard University Press.