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Involvement on the part of the students can be troublesome. However, it is a precondition for high-quality tuition.

Irksome students

As a teacher of medical students I often feel that I am unable to make sufficient use of their potential and eagerness. Many of them may feel that the studies are challenging and that the time and opportunity for active involvement are limited. When I was a student, I never really gave any thought to how important it is to university teachers to have actively involved students. Now, having tutored medical students for many years, I notice this a great deal. When a batch of students includes some highly interested ones who dive in with questions and comments in a session, this is stimulating for me as a teacher as well as for the other students.

The idea that students ought to be actively involved in the tuition is a frequent topic in the festive addresses held at the start of each academic year. What does this mean? Recently, the proposal to reintroduce grades caused a major stir among the medical students at the University of Oslo, but this involvement on the part of the students found little favour with the faculty management (1). The perception of student involvement as annoying or inappropriate is far from new. For example, it tallies well with experience of an issue that aroused the students more than 30 years ago.

In the autumn of 1982, medical students at the University of Oslo started a debate on autopsy in a number of articles in the student journal *Æsculap*. These bore titles such as *Is the right to refuse autopsy real?* and *Corpse-cutting practice*. The students believed that explicit consent ought to be required before an autopsy could be performed (2, 3). More factual information had to be provided for the next of kin or the patient to have a real opportunity to refuse an autopsy (4). This caused a hue and cry. The ministry sent out a circular, the issue was addressed in the Storting's parliamentary question time and there was a flurry of meetings between ministries, the Directorate of Health and the medical faculties (5). The issue was discussed in the media, in journals and books (2, 6), and the students followed up with a survey among doctors who had experience of requesting permission for an autopsy from next of kin (7). In the end, the authorities appointed a government commission (5).

The issue provoked the pathologists. It is a telling sign of the heated nature of the debate that when Professor Kristen Arnesen (1918–2005) was invited to write a response to a medical student in the letters column of the Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association he replied: «I have on one former occasion entered into an exchange of opinion with Mr Torgeir Bruun Wyller. I am loath to do it again» (8). The point here is that it was the students who had initially raised the issue, which had given rise to considerable public ripple effects. It is worth reminding ourselves of this as an example of the possible consequences of active student involvement.

Eager students inspire me to perform better as a teacher (12). Active involvement on the part of the students stimulates me into providing stimulating tuition. It's as simple as that: students themselves help provide the best tuition.

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