

Student Attitudes on Teaching in the Core Clinical Year

Background

Peer teaching in medical education has demonstrated benefits for obtaining a depth of knowledge and development of skills to be an effective educator. Physicians teach daily in their clinical practices. Given the importance of educational skills, it is critical to understand student attitudes towards teaching to identify future opportunities to strengthen student teaching skills.

Evaluation

At the Colorado Springs Branch of the University of Colorado, didactics were peer-led for three classes. Surveys were completed by the second and third classes to better understand their previous experience and attitudes towards teaching. A post survey was collected at completion for the second class to assess their experience. Due to COVID-19 we were not able to collect for the 3rd class.

Thirty-seven of the forty-one students completed the pre-survey (90%). Thirty-three percent reported previous training in education that varied from workshops to a master's. Seventy-six percent of students reported they were somewhat (38%) or very interested (38%) in teaching. Notably, 95% strongly agreed (54%) or agreed (41%) that knowledge and skills of teaching were important to them with 76% strongly agreed that teaching skills are important as a physician. They identified benefits of teaching experience and skills as allowing for better communication with patients and their families (89%) and improving their clinical knowledge and or skills (84%).

95% of students reported they found teaching their peers rewarding in the post teaching survey (90% completion). 37% reported the sessions were as effective or more effective than faculty lectures while 63% reported the peer-led sessions were less effective, consistent with end of the year surveys. Student reflections on the process were "it is overall positive -I learned more having to teach" and "I have found it to be a worthwhile experience, seems like more adult learning". To be successful educators, the students identified a need for teaching workshops, mentorship, and effective feedback.

Discussion

Students clearly identify the importance of teaching to their learning and future careers and find teaching peers rewarding. On reflection students were able to identify the primary challenge in teaching was finding time during their busy clinical year and coordination with community faculty. There are many opportunities over four years of medical education, particularly with curriculum reform, for students to learn effective teaching strategies and practice teaching with mentorship and feedback. Students may benefit from clear identification of teaching opportunities in the curriculum and communication of additional opportunities to receive formal training on education through the Academy of Medical Educators and other avenues.

More research on the impact of peer teaching may help elucidate the benefits and costs of this technique and may guide future educational avenues, such as development of a teaching certificate as documentation of scholarly activity.

Conclusions

Medical education should include education on the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be an effective educator. Opportunities to practice these skills should be identified with appropriate mentorship and effective feedback. Further study is needed to identify and optimize student as teacher opportunities.