

USE OF A PARALLEL PROCESS PBL CASE TO INDUCE BEHAVIORAL CHANGE IN FIRST SEMESTER MEDICAL STUDENTS AT ROSS UNIVERSITY

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PURPOSE

The Ross University School of Medicine (RUSM) Department of Integrated Medical Education (IME) designed a PBL case using parallel process to address a need for increased use of student support services. Medical students may not recognize defects in their study habits, under-utilize student support services, and frequently disregard faculty recommendations for study and wellness habits until after they fail exams. We designed a parallel process PBL case to increase student awareness of these issues.

METHODS

All first semester students participated in a PBL case involving a failing, sleep-deprived, drug-using "RUSM student" who finally presents at the academic counseling center after failing two exams. The PBL case requires students to conduct an evidence-based review of medical literature as they research how sleep, alcohol, and drugs affect learning; explore the best study habits according to learning theory; and then conclude with self-reflection on academic performance and behaviors. Anonymous surveys were administered to 544 students and 42 facilitators, focusing on the effect of the case on student behaviors.

RESULTS

This current semester's survey results will be combined with those of the next cohort for presentation at the conference. Anecdotally, a number of students reported to their facilitators that the case has effected behavior change in their own study habits, sleep habits, and other mal-adaptive stress management tools such as self-medicating behaviors. Some students repeating the PBL course self-reported to their group their personal success after benefiting from RUSM student support services. Several students self-referred to the academic success program as a result of studying the case.

CONCLUSIONS

Offering students an opportunity to discuss and reflect on a fictional peer in a familiar situation may help them to adjust their behaviors and seek assistance early enough to prevent failure.

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MENTORING MEDICAL STUDENTS IN RADIATION ONCOLOGY: POTENTIAL FOR APPLICATION ACROSS DISCIPLINES

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PURPOSE

Mentoring has been espoused as an effective tool for assisting the career and personal development of a mentee while simultaneously benefiting the mentor. To date, the literature has seen great focus on mentoring faculty, research fellows, and residents but relatively little on undergraduate medical students and in only a subset of disciplines (e.g. surgery, internal medicine, and emergency medicine). Radiation oncology has yet to be addressed in this context but would likely benefit from such a discussion. Furthermore, it may well serve as a springboard for discussion on implementing mentorship programs in other disciplines.

METHODS

We reviewed our formal and informal mentoring program in radiation oncology in order to identify successful mentorship paradigms in both the traditional and non-traditional curriculum.

RESULTS

In the traditional curriculum, we identified vertically-integrated radiation oncology mentorship through the undergraduate curriculum including: Introduction to Clinical Medicine (first-year), required Oncology Block (second-year), required Radiology clerkship (third-year), Advanced Clinical Anatomy, Introduction to Radiation Oncology and Clinical Cancer Research (fourth year). In the non-traditional curriculum, we identified several areas that enhance mentorship of medical students including the Medical Student Summer Research Symposium, the Student Oncology Society, one-on-one mentoring relationships through no-credit research, and rotations external to our school such as the Simon Kramer Externship.

CONCLUSIONS

Mentoring students in radiation oncology, mainly through extensions of classroom instruction and research, can allow for exposure to the field that has both breadth and depth. Employing a vertically-integrated curriculum across pre-clinical and clinical years, thereby engaging hopeful family practitioners and radiation oncologists alike, in conjunction with nurturing research interests can help to develop a potent approach to personalized mentoring.

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OBSERVING CONSUMERS IN MEDICAL SCHOOL

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PURPOSE

Much has been written in contemporary higher education about the approach taken by students to their environment and the task of learning. A shift from academic merit to student consumerism has been highlighted. Teachers and administrators must be vigilant for signs of a consumerist attitude and develop appropriate response strategies. As a curriculum administrator for a medical school, the author reports his observations from interactions with students highlighting key elements of student consumerism and an early response by administration.

METHODS

With responsibility for curriculum and the well-being of nearly 1,000 medical students, the author receives first line feedback from students on problems and issues on a daily basis. A reflective content analysis was done using key statements from sequential student interactions to identify consumerist attitude where the commodity paradigm appeared to take precedence over the instructional or learning paradigm.

RESULTS

The following summarises key statements used by students in their feedback: "

- I am paying fees therefore I expect this!
- How come there are so few persons getting As in this course?
- Why do we have to learn about?
- Why can't the continuous assessment be x% instead of y%?
- I decided not to study x as I thought I could pass if I only studied y!
- I don't understand why I failed; I need to know exactly where I fell down!
- Dr. Y's classes are boring so I don't attend.
- We don't get much teaching on that firm, I'd like to move to the other firm.
- There is no wireless access at this point.
- We need a meeting with you to discuss!"

The administration has been strengthening programmes to deal with academic support and personal development and acculturation over the last 3 years in order to better understand and to be proactive and responsive to students needs.

CONCLUSIONS

There are signs of growing consumerism among medical students from as early as the first year of training. Additional efforts to understand these phenomena, its impact and ways to meet students in this new paradigm must be addressed.

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A PRE-MATRICULATION INTERVENTION TO IMPROVE THE ADJUSTMENT OF STUDENTS TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

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PURPOSE

The transition from a baccalaureate program to a medical curriculum can be a difficult period for many students. Our study asked whether providing students with review materials, and a means of assessing their degree of preparedness prior to matriculation, influenced actual and perceived performance in first year basic science courses.

METHODS

Didactic review materials in four basic science subjects encountered in the first year were made available to pre-matriculants online. Access to materials for each subject was contingent upon completion of a pre-test. Pre-matriculants were free to use the materials as they saw fit. Once students matriculated, performance in basic science subjects was compared between those who had accessed the materials and those who had not. Students who accessed the materials were also surveyed to determine if they perceived any benefit from their use.

RESULTS

Over half of matriculants chose to access the intervention materials. There was no significant difference in MCAT, science GPA, or total GPA between those students who chose to access the intervention materials and those who did not. In terms of perceived value, seventy one percent of respondents found the intervention to be 'helpful' or 'very helpful'. Students also reported gains in confidence in their ability to perform well in medical school. Most interestingly, those students who accessed the intervention materials had significantly better examination performance in basic science subjects than those who did not.

CONCLUSIONS

An online pre-matriculation intervention can provide useful background material to interested students. Access to this material increased academic performance in the first year basic science courses and was perceived as valuable by students.

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