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2009

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Recommended Citation

Arendt, Cassandra; Fortner, Jeff; Fujisaki, Brad; Jordan, Jennifer; Karimi, Reza; Millard, Michael; and Morrison, Stephanie, "Using a Student Focus Group to Assist a PharmD Program in Identifying Abilities Based Outcomes" (2009). *Faculty Scholarship (PHRM)*. 46.
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Using a Student Focus Group to Assist a PharmD Program in Identifying Abilities Based Outcomes

Abstract

The Pacific University School of Pharmacy (SOP) developed new Abilities Based Outcomes (ABOs) to guide program development and assessment. As part of this collaborative process, which involved faculty, staff and administration, student input was also sought. An Assessment Student Focus Group, in a directed process facilitated by the faculty Assessment Committee chair, developed ABOs that were “meaningful”, “manageable” and “measurable”. Many of these were similar to those developed by the faculty and staff.

Disciplines

Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences

Comments

Poster presented at the 2009 Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACCP). Boston, MA - July 18 - 21, 2009.

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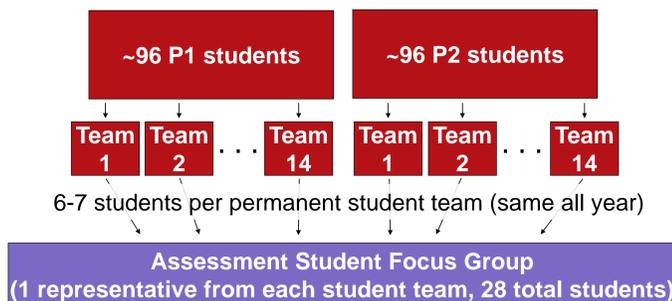
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Introduction

The Pacific University School of Pharmacy (SOP) developed new Abilities Based Outcomes (ABOs) to guide program development and assessment. As part of this collaborative process, which involved faculty, staff and administration, student input was also sought. An Assessment Student Focus Group, in a directed process facilitated by the faculty Assessment Committee chair, developed ABOs that were “meaningful”, “manageable” and “measurable”. Many of these were similar to those developed by the faculty and staff.

Student Focus Groups

The SOP delivers an accelerated modified-block curriculum comprised of two didactic and one clinical years. First and second professional year students (P1 and P2) are assigned to 6-7 member teams throughout each academic year. One student from each team was invited to serve as the team’s representative to the Assessment Student Focus Group (ASFG; a similar Curriculum Student Focus Group was also established).



The purpose of the student focus group was to assist the faculty Assessment Committee and SOP administration in interpreting survey data, and provide a forum for discussion of issues related to student assessment. The ASFG convened on an approximately monthly basis for one hour. Meeting attendance was not mandatory, and snacks were provided. Assignments were distributed electronically one week prior to each meeting, and these required each ASFG representative to meet with his or her student team to collect desired input to bring to the meeting for discussion. All views expressed in the meetings were kept anonymous to facilitate open discussion.

2008-2009 ASFG topics:

1. Generation of abilities based outcomes and assessment tools
2. Feedback on IPPE assignments and rotation effectiveness
3. Feedback on examination policies and formats
4. Feedback on admissions prerequisites and P1 performance

Process for student input on ABOs

In late fall 2008 each ASFG representative was asked to work with their team to identify three abilities based outcomes (ABOs) that they felt graduates of their program should possess in each of the following categories:

knowledge, professional skills, attitudes, values

At the ASFG meeting, students were split into three groups (each mixing P1 and P2 students together) and asked to choose the “most important” three ABOs in each of the four categories. The groups then scored each of these twelve ABOs for the criteria “meaningful”, “manageable” and “measurable” to indicate the level at which they could be used to guide curricular development and be accurately assessed.

- Meaningful** relevant to the didactic and/or experiential curriculum or related clinical skills
- Manageable** relevant material could be delivered in the curriculum
- Measurable** evidence of the outcome can be reliably observed and scored

Several of the ABOs formulated by students were not scored as “measurable” by the ASFG. In early 2009, ASFG members returned to their student teams to discuss how “immeasurable” ABOs could be measured. This exercise demonstrated to the students that character qualities make less appropriate ABOs than observable activities.

Examples of “immeasurable” student-generated ABOs:

Students should realize and embrace that integrity is a very important quality in the pharmacy profession since the graduated students will not be intensely supervised. It is up to the graduated student to have the integrity to self-supervise himself/herself.

Respect patient values: realize that your own ethics may be challenged, yet find a way to meet patient needs.

Nurture an inquisitive attitude and motivation to learn new things affecting patient medication care (lifelong learning). Develop a good attitude to the evolving profession of pharmacy as newer scientific research becomes available.

Graduated students are able to manage stressful situations successfully in order to avoid unprofessional behavior and harm to patient and one’s self.

Graduated students accept personal responsibility and accountability for their actions.

Student/faculty ABOs

Faculty and staff met shortly after the late fall ASFG meeting to produce a set of ABOs for the program. Student-generated ABOs were shared in this meeting and incorporated into the final set.

Examples of ABOs proposed independently by both faculty/staff and students:

Drug distribution systems

- Interpret and comply with civil and administrative federal and state laws involving pharmacy practice
- Provide patient consultations in a format to ensure correct, clear and concise medication information is shared and received

Drug information

- Synthesize an evidence-based therapeutic plan/drug information response in a concise, practical and organized format using acceptable methods of referencing

Communication

- Consistently utilize appropriate and effective verbal and nonverbal speaking and listening communication skills including: clarity, enunciation, pronunciation, rate/volume, terminology and eye contact with all health care professionals, patients, families and caregivers
- Incorporate an interprofessional team approach to maximize outcomes of individual patients and populations

Medication Therapy Evaluation

- Create and evaluate treatment regimen with optimal outcomes utilizing pharmacokinetic and drug formulation data, as well as psycho-social, ethical and financial information specific to the patient

Conclusions

- Students will participate in student focus groups when invited.
- Student focus groups can be a useful way of providing information to committees and administration beyond surveys.
- Students can recognize skills and character traits they desire in themselves and their classmates as pharmacists which overlap with those that faculty desire to inculcate.
- Most students can distinguish the difference between skills that are measurable and personality traits that are more difficult to quantify.

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