Assessing Student Perception of Conducting Cumulative Final Examinations in an Eight-Hour Format Comparable to the National Board

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Description
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Disciplines
Dentistry

Comments
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Assessing Student Perception of Conducting Cumulative Final Examinations in an Eight-Hour Format Comparable to the National Board

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INTRODUCTION

The National Board Dental Hygiene Examination is often approached with concern and anxiety, especially for ESL students or those students with test taking anxiety. Many programs offer or recommend students participate in board preparation courses to help students review and ultimately succeed in this examination process. At Pacific University, an alternative testing procedure was created to help students integrate knowledge from multiple courses, reduce test taking anxiety and enhance success on the NBDHE.

THE PROGRAM

A program-wide, cumulative final examination process was implemented throughout the curriculum. The exam format closely resembles the NBDHE with two 4 hour, 200 question sessions. A review session is scheduled on the day following the exam to enhance test taking strategies and understanding of material.

METHOD

In August 2009, a survey was developed to evaluate student perspective on this testing procedure. The survey was sent to recent graduates and dental hygiene students currently enrolled in the dental hygiene program at Pacific University. 115 surveys were returned for an 89.8% return rate.

RESULTS

The data revealed this system of testing had an overall positive impact in the following areas:

- learning of test taking strategies
- understanding of course content
- experience and confidence during the actual NBDHE

70.9% believed it provided an accurate testing of their knowledge

89.9% believe the testing procedure should be continued

89.9% believed the testing protocol had a positive impact on their experience taking the NBDHE

19.4% believed it negatively impacted their course grades

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Overall, there was a positive statistical significance in taking a cumulative final exam repeatedly throughout the program. Even though students initially had considerable anxiety over the process, they strongly recommend the continuation of this testing procedure. Students perceived the mandatory post examination review was helpful with improving their understanding of the material and test-taking strategies. Reaction on impact on GPA varied.

CONCLUSION

Further evaluation is warranted to determine the percent of student grades negatively impacted by this examination process. Consideration may be given to altering the weight this examination carries toward final course grades.