Incorporating the “Teaching as a Competency” Conceptual Model for Medical Educators into a Faculty Peer Review Process: A Pilot Assessment of Teaching Skills

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Introduction

Modeled after the physician competencies developed by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education1, Srinivasan, Li, Meyers, Pratt, Collins, Braddock, Skeff, West, Henderson, Hales and Hilty2 recently proposed a framework of critical skills for medical educators in order to better define and promote effective teaching and learning.

Six core competencies necessary to the teaching role were identified:

• Medical Knowledge
• Learner-Centeredness
• Interpersonal / Communication Skills
• Professionalism and Role Modeling
• Practice-Based Reflection
• Systems-Based Practice

Horowitz, Van Eyck and Albanese3 advocate for a system of faculty assessment that includes more than just student evaluations. The Srinivasan et al. “Teaching as a Competency” model identifies educator development and teaching quality from the programmatic rather than student perspective and has the potential to satisfy this recommendation. Given the challenges associated with resource allocation for faculty teaching efforts, incorporation of these newly elaborated teaching competencies as a means of evaluating faculty effectiveness is timely.

Objectives

The SOM Division of Physician Assistant Education presently utilizes a peer review process wherein classroom teaching faculty are observed by colleagues several times during each academic year. Peer evaluations are included in the educator’s portfolio and are considered during performance evaluations. While the currently utilized evaluation form adequately examines lecture content, presentation and professionalism, it neglects to address important areas of learner-centeredness, practice-based reflection and systems-based practice.

To determine whether the “Teaching as a Competency” model can be effectively incorporated into a faculty peer review process, a pilot project was conceived and initiated.

Methodology

A draft peer review form based on the six core teaching competencies was developed and reviewed among faculty peer reviewers. Initial beta testing of the form and the evaluation process took place during two planned faculty peer reviews in winter and early spring terms. On conclusion of the assessment tool trial, a preliminary review of the performance of the form and process was completed.

Results

Use of the teaching competencies provides a seamless assessment of faculty competencies in medical knowledge, learner-centeredness, interpersonal / communication skills, professionalism and role modeling. This peer-review process does not adequately assess practice-based reflection and systems-based practice as these are not measurable by observation alone and require assessment via other methodologies.

Conclusions

Srinivasan et al. “anticipate that concerted efforts to use teaching competencies will have a progressive effect on improving the quality of educator training” (p.1219). While practice-based reflection and systems-based practice are not easily evaluated using this tool in a classroom setting, incorporation of the remaining competencies in a faculty peer review process has the potential to identify areas of need in skill and resource development for educators and ultimately enhance educational quality.