Roundtable

Clinical Year Challenges Encountered with Increasing PA Student Enrollment

PAEA Annual Education Forum
October 24-28, 2007

Facilitators: Midwestern University Physician Assistant Program – Glendale, Arizona
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Objectives:

At the end of this session, each participant should be able to:

- Discuss the ongoing trend toward increasing PA student enrollment.
- Discuss the responsibilities of PA educators who work in the clinical year and the additional challenges posed by increasing student enrollment.
- Develop potential solutions to added clinical year responsibilities.
- Implement strategies that meet student and faculty needs in the clinical year.

Abstract:

This session will center on discussing and developing strategies to meet the demands that increasing PA student enrollment places on PA educators who work in the clinical year. Participants will be asked to share issues, concerns, and effective solutions encountered while managing larger class sizes. Additionally, participants will be asked to consider and develop networking tools that may benefit clinical PA education as a whole.

Small group discussions:

- Discuss clinical year issues and rank concerns in order of importance.
- Brainstorm and develop global solutions to challenges identified in the initial small group discussion.

Large group discussion:

- Summarize concerns and solutions identified during small group discussions and discuss future plans for clinical year faculty.

Resources:

Physician Assistant Clinical Coordinators website:
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ClinicalCoordinators , developed by John Leffert, MPAS, PA-C, Assistant Professor/Clinical Coordinator for Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania Physician Assistant Program

Guidelines of Courtesy Regarding Collaboration on the Use of Clinical Training Sites available at http://www.paeaonline.org under Policies and Reports of the Members section.

References:

Hooker RS and Cawley JF. Physician Assistants in American Medicine, 2nd ed. St. Louis: Churchill Linvingstone; 2003.

Simon A and Link M. The 22nd Annual Report on Physician Assistant Education Programs in the United States, 2005-2006. Available at http://www.paeaonline.org .

Summary of Roundtable
Clinical Year Challenges Encountered with Increasing PA Student Enrollment

Presented at the PAEA Education Forum
October 27, 2007

According to the 22nd Annual Report on Physician Assistant Educational Programs in the United States, the number of students enrolled in physician assistant programs has risen from approximately 2,500 students in 1984 to approximately 9,267 students in 2005. During this same time period, the number of students enrolled in each program has risen from 47 to 87.5. Presenter Jacqueline Spiegel, MS, PA-C introduced the roundtable discussion by reviewing this trend toward increasing PA student enrollment and by commenting on common clinical year challenges and potential solutions associated with increasing numbers of PA students. Attendees then participated in two roundtable discussions.

In the first small roundtable discussion, participants identified and discussed clinical year challenges that they are currently facing. **Challenges** identified by attendees are as follows:

- Recruiting and retaining additional rotation sites
- Meeting ARC-PA standards for clinical rotations
- Increased administrative duties
- Test security
- Competition from medical schools and other PA programs
- Housing for rotations
- Students attempting to change rotations
- Diminished hands-on experience at rotation sites
- Addressing issues related to the "clinical" practice of medicine during rotations versus the practice of medicine taught in the academic setting
- Paying for rotations
- Students with "consumerism" attitudes

Challenges ranked as most important were (1) recruiting and retaining additional rotation sites, (2) addressing the issue of paying for rotations and (3) managing added administrative duties.

During the second roundtable discussion, participants discussed potential solutions to the top ranked challenges**. Solutions** discussed are as follows:

(1) Solutions for recruiting and retaining additional rotation sites:
    - Establishing rotations and providing housing in sites outside of the immediate geographical location of the PA program
    - Asking providers who write letters of recommendation for students to become preceptors
    - Utilizing AHEC (Area Health Education Centers) sites
    - Paying preceptors when such payments seem unavoidable
    - Facilitating student arranged rotations

- Sharing preceptor contact information with other programs when a preceptor is not being utilized
- Networking with other clinical coordinators when trying to establish rotations outside of a program's geographic location

(2) Paying for preceptors:
No concrete solutions were offered to address this issue. Participants did express on-going concern regarding a need for programs to pay sites. The issue of coordinating with other programs in the same geographic location to ensure that one program is not paying more than another program was mentioned.

(3) Managing added administrative duties:
- Using high level staff to do many of the administrative tasks associated with coordinating clinical rotations
- Utilizing current technologies such as Typhon and the medical EMS (Educational Management System) to manage rotation placement, preceptor information, hospital paperwork, communication, student logs, and other duties.

The final discussion was incomplete secondary to time. Participants were encouraged to continue the conversation on the website currently being used for communicating between clinical coordinators, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ClinicalCoordinators.

Submitted on November 9, 2007 by Bettie Coplan, MPAS, PA-C and Jacqueline Spiegel, MS, PA-C.

Clinical Year Challenges Encountered with Increasing PA Student Enrollment

A Roundtable Discussion
PAEA Annual Education Forum

Jacqueline Spiegel, MS, PA-C
Bettie Coplan, MPAS, PA-C

October 27, 2007

Objectives

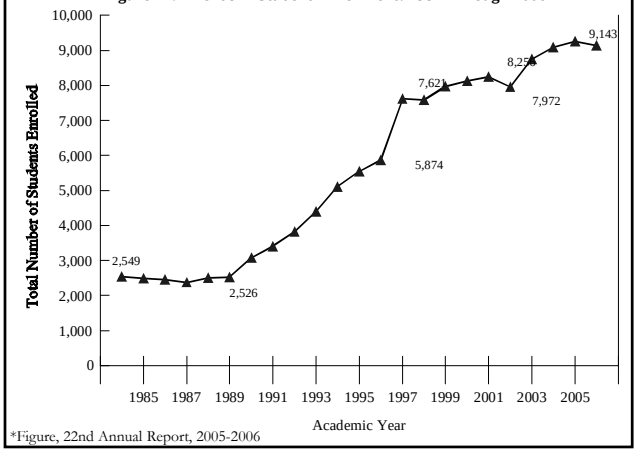
- Overview
- Small group discussions
  - Discuss clinical year issues and rank concerns in order of importance
  - Brainstorm and develop global solutions to challenges identified as most important
- Large group discussion
  - Summarize concerns and solutions
  - Discuss future plans to implement solutions

Increasing PA Student Enrollment

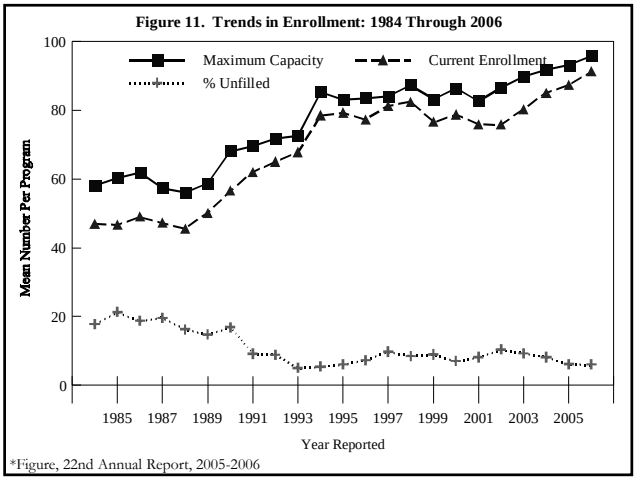
- Total # of Students Enrolled
  - 1984 – 1989: ≈ 2,500+ students
  - 2005: 9,267 students
- Number of PA Programs
  - 1984: 53 programs
  - 2005: 134 programs
- Current Enrollment All Classes
  - 1984/1985: 47.0 students
  - 2005/2006: 87.5 students

*22nd Annual Report on Physician Assistant Educational Programs in the United States, 2005-2006

Figure 14. Trends in Student Enrollment: 1984 Through 2006



*Figure, 22nd Annual Report, 2005-2006



*Figure, 22nd Annual Report, 2005-2006

Challenges: Rotation Sites

- **"PAs at the crossroads: Where will the profession go next?", Stephen C. Crane, PhD, MPH – Editorial, JAAPA, September 2007.**
  - "…..The only question is whether enough PAs will be produced over the coming decade to have a substantial impact on these problems. The production of PAs will be a direct function of increasing the supply of PA faculty and expanding the number of clinical training sites for PA programs. These issues should be at the top of the agenda for PA organizations. My fear is that they are not….."

Challenges: Rotation Sites

- **"Placing Students with Preceptors a 'Scramble' for PA Programs" – AAPA News, 9-15-2007**
  - "….For some reason, it seems that younger physicians and PA's are not as inclined to accept the view that participating in the education of future practitioners is a professional obligation…."
  - " … The biggest competition …is not coming from PA programs, but from our medical school colleagues…"
  - "….One year we might have enough in family practice, but not enough in surgery; that might flip flop the next year…"

Challenges: Added Administrative Duties

- Affiliation agreements…UGH!
- Keeping up with the paperwork!!
- The system worked with 25 students….it doesn't work with 40!
- Clinical Coordinator Burn out

Challenges: Communication

- Communication with increasing # of students
- Communication with increasing # of preceptors
- Communication with increasing # of site administrators
  - Who is in charge….the preceptor or the office manager??

Challenges: Professionalism

- Does the increasing # of students influence:
  - Your ability to teach professionalism?
  - Your ability to enforce professional standards?
  - Your ability to pick up on students struggling?
- When do you cut a student a break?….how does that influence the behavior of other students?....does it make it worse for you in the long run?

Solutions? (help!)

- **Rotation sites**
  - Student arranged rotations
  - "Buying" rotations
  - Creatively meeting ARC-PA standards
  - Partnering with AHEC administrators
  - Providing housing outside of your geographical area
  - Networking
    - http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ClinicalCoordinators

Solutions?

- **Administrative duties**
  - Faculty vs. staff (eg. Clinical Education Specialist)
- **Communication with increasing #'s**
  - Technology
- **Professionalism**
  - Well defined and published policies and procedures
    - Create a Clinical Year Handbook
  - Do the students understand the expectations?
  - Be fair but be consistent!
  - Everyone needs to be on board…..students, faculty, staff, program directors, and institutional administration!!!

Small round table discussion #1

- Discuss clinical year challenges and rank in order of importance. ≈15 minutes

Small round table discussion #2

- Brainstorm! …and pass along your program's successes!
- Discuss solutions to challenges identified as most important.
- If time permits, discuss ways to improve networking. ≈15 minutes

Large round table discussion

- Summarize challenges identified as most important
- Summarize proposed solutions
- Discuss implementing new strategies! ≈20 minutes

References

- Crane, Steven C. PhD, MPH. "PAs at the crossroads: Where will the profession go next?". JAAPA, Vol. 20, No. 9 , September 2007. Pg 10.
- Hooker RS and Cawley JF. Physician Assistants in American Medicine, 2nd ed. St. Louis: Churchill Linvingstone; 2003.
- Kuttler, Hillel. "Placing students with Preceptors a 'Scramble" for PA programs". AAPA News, Vol. 28, No. 16, September 15, 2007. Pg 1,6.
- Simon A and Link M. 22nd Annual Report on Physician Assistant Educational Programs in the United States, 2005-2006. Available at www.PAEAonline.org

Resources

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