

Preparing a New Physician Assistant for Evidence-Based Practice

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Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM) is the standard for medical practice today. While a growing number of physician assistant (PA) educational programs are offering coursework and didactic training in EBM, there is lack of published evidence that those curricula also provide opportunities for EBM application in clinical practice. The Masters curriculum described in this poster was developed to require clinical application of EBM skills and principles and better prepare new clinicians for EBM practice.

Our Masters curriculum is a two year program composed of three phases: didactic training, clinical experience, and practical examination. In the first phase students learn EBM concepts and skills, including performing electronic medical literature searches during their didactic year. The second and third phases occur during the student's clinical training year. For Phase 2, students select a Masters clinical rotation and develop a clinical question pertinent to that medical specialty, based on patient encounters and practice trends. The clinical question is developed into a research review and a proposal for implementation. Phase 3 concludes the EBM experience for the student, culminating in the presentation of their Masters project to faculty and fellow students and the submission of a written report. During Phase 3, students are evaluated by means of an EBM Objective Structured Clinical Exam (OSCE) using simulated patients. This EBM OSCE requires the student to do an initial visit from which they create a clinical questions and a follow-up visit using the evidence they gathered to develop and discuss a treatment plan with the same patient.

This EBM Physician Assistant Masters curriculum offers clinical experiences and prepares new Physician Assistants for evidence-based practice. The three phases of training allow the opportunity to fully understand the evidence and to apply it to various aspects of clinical practice.