

Which Clinical Performance Characteristics Do Preceptors Value?

Rachel J Stranathan MS PA, Jonathan Gietzen MS PA-C, Mary Von PA-C MS CLC, Latha Reddy MS PA-C

Background: Meaningful evaluation is imperative to identify areas of strength and weakness as a student progresses through their training. What does it take to become a competent medical professional? Clinical competence in medically based training includes cognitive, psychomotor and behavioral components such as ‘fund of knowledge’, basic procedural skills and professional character. We wondered whether the clinical evaluation form used at Pacific University accurately reflected the various characteristics our clinical preceptors valued when providing feedback as to the student’s progression with their training. Preceptors were polled to investigate what components are of importance to them when they are evaluating students. **Hypothesis:** Are Physician Assistant programs comprehensively reflecting all of the necessary components necessary to adequately evaluate a student clinically. Also, does this evaluation include professional aspects of medicine? **Study Design:** Pilot Study **Methods:** This study evaluated clinical year preceptor evaluation forms. We solicited PA programs from across the US. We compared the various characteristics evaluated on each of the forms to the other programs. Using these tabulated characteristics we developed a survey that was sent to clinical preceptors of Pacific University School of Physician Assistant Studies. **Results:** 60 medical professionals participated. None of the clinical evaluation forms were considered to have completely evaluated all of the necessary characteristics identified by our clinical preceptors. Figure 1 is a pie graph depicting the title of the health care professional participating in the survey. The majority of participants were MDs, 56% followed by Physician Assistants, 37%. Table 1 and 2 asked whether or not skills in patient management were necessary to evaluate during their clinical training. Such patient management skills included was history taking and physical exam skills. Other questions included patient education, technical skills (i.e. suturing, biopsies, casting/splinting) and fund of knowledge. The results of the survey revealed the majority of preceptors felt it was critical to evaluate clinical judgment and reasoning, physical exam skills, and history taking skills. These skills were rated critical to evaluate in over 40 of the respondents. **Discussion:** Our results demonstrate there is a critical component to evaluating professionalism in training health care professionals. None of the evaluation forms submitted from our convenience sample of PA programs evaluated all of the characteristics our clinical preceptors identified as important to evaluate in a student. Our clinical preceptors felt that a comprehensive review of a student’s clinical and professional characteristics were necessary for a complete evaluation of their progress. In addition to assessing behavior, we can and should evaluate trainees’ motives and their learning environments. There is a meaningful and measurable difference between *being* a professional and *acting* professionally. It is certainly possible to behave professionally without having authentically internalized core values. Even if trainees exemplify the behavioral standards of professionalism, we must attend to such inconsistencies between the inner self and outward appearance, sending a message that authenticity is a matter of great concern. **Conclusion:** Gaining insight into student’s professionalism is a laborious process in such a short time that is afforded to the student’s clinical training. This obstacle may never be overcome; however, it may be possible to develop better tools to evaluate the student’s overall performance during their time at the clinical site. •Including the attributes of professionalism and ethical conduct on a clinical year evaluation form may help the student gain insight into how they are perceived professionally. Knowing and understanding what attributes encompass this growing concept allows the student to act in such a way that emulates the professionalism model. The continued development of standardized clinical year competencies encourages new and developing ideas in the world of medicine. Reviewing how we monitor a student’s professional progress through PA school will help build more objective evaluation forms for preceptors and PA programs alike. Clinical Preceptors offer insight into PA

student's clinical skills that encompass more than history taking and physical examination. Integrating their feedback into the assessment process is valuable and will improve the clinical phase of PA education. For More Information Contact: Mary Von at (503) 352-7308, maryvon@pacificu.edu.