

Patterns of Student Utilization of Textbooks in the Academic Year of Physician Assistant (PA) education

Authors: David Coniglio, MPA, PA-C; Sherrie Spear, MHS, PA-C; Annamarie Streilein, MHS, PA-C; Karen J. Hills, MS, PA-C; Patricia M. Dieter, MPA, PA-C; Perri Morgan, PA-C, PhD

Institution: Physician Assistant Program, Department of Community and Family Medicine, Duke University School of Medicine

Background

The academic year curriculum at our institution includes courses in the basic medical sciences, anatomy, physical diagnosis, patient assessment, clinical medicine, diagnostic methods, evidence-based medicine, and health systems and policy. Incoming students are provided with a list of required and recommended textbooks. Textbook utilization by students is not well-reported in the PA education literature.

Methods

We conducted an anonymous survey of members of a first year class at the end of their second semester. Students were asked if they purchased, borrowed from classmates or library, or did not use specified texts. They were also asked to express their opinion of the utility of the texts for study of course learning objectives, for study of course content, and for supplementing content in other courses. Survey items were presented as statements to which students could express agreement or disagreement using a Likert-scale format. Response categories were aggregated into positive and negative responses to the statements.

Results

The response rate was 59%. All students purchased the main clinical medicine text. Most students bought texts for physical diagnosis/patient assessment (97%), physiology (87.8%), anatomy and EKG (81.8%). Borrowing of texts was less common. Of thirteen texts required in the first two semesters, the majority of students stated they did not use four of the texts. Similar responses were seen for questions of the utility of texts to support learning. Respondents rated the physiology text, the main clinical medical text, the EKG text, and the physical diagnosis text very useful for study. Greater than 50% of respondents reported finding the physiology, EKG, clinical medicine, and physical diagnosis texts useful for studying material in other courses. Texts in physiology, anatomy, clinical medicine, physical diagnosis, and the EKG text were reported by more than 50% of respondents to be useful in studying specific learning objectives.

Conclusions

The findings of this survey suggest that students do not uniformly purchase texts required for the first year curriculum. Foundation texts such as physiology, a basic clinical medicine text, and a physical diagnosis text may be viewed as essential and clinically relevant, and thus more important to the student to purchase and utilize. This information has been useful as we plan curriculum changes and recommendations for student use of text material.