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Professional Development of Medical Students Transitioning from Preclinical to Clinical Training

Bridget Croniger

Wayne State University School of Medicine, bridget.croniger@med.wayne.edu

Mikaela Grudzien

Wayne State University School of Medicine

Rubab Imtiaz

Wayne State University School of Medicine

Jennifer Mendez

Department of Medical Education, Wayne State University School of Medicine, Detroit, MI

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Title:

Professional Development of Medical Students Transitioning from Preclinical to Clinical Training

Background:

Personal and professional development (PPD) is a competency domain for graduated U.S. medical students. Current research shows that PPD is lowest at transitional periods, such as the transition from preclinical to clinical training.

Methods:

To assess professional development at a large, allopathic medical school, a survey with seven statements regarding professional development was formed. The statements encompassed domains of mentorship, communication skills, professionalism, team work, and innovation and asked students to rank each statement from 1-5 (1 - highly deficient, 5 - highly proficient). The online, anonymous survey was emailed to all second year medical students at Wayne State University School of Medicine (WSUSOM) (n=303) over a 2-month time period after completion of a Service Learning course that fostered professional development and taught about the social determinants of health.

Results:

114 (37.6%) students responded to the survey. Overall, students reported feeling most proficient in working with people from different backgrounds (average = 3.91) and least proficient in seeking advice from advisors and mentors (3.27). On average, students felt proficient or highly proficient in all categories.

Conclusion:

Overall, students felt their professional skills improved after the Service Learning course, and in general felt most proficient in team-based competencies. These preliminary results indicate a need for empowering students to seek advice from mentors. Guidance is especially crucial when students are facing transition periods. There is also room for improvement in teaching students to navigate difficult conversations with empathy and courage. It is also important to continue monitoring professional development over the course of clinical rotations to prevent declines in competencies.