

Reaching Beyond the Textbook in Teaching Geriatric Care: Implementing a Senior Home Visit Project in Medical Education

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GOALS

- 1) better understanding for students of preferences and support systems for community dwelling older adults,
- 2) enlighten students to issues of aging and interdisciplinary care,
- 3) foster positive attitudes toward caring for older adults early in career development,
- 4) build an ethic of civic responsibility in professional students.

METHODS

- 277 YR 2 medical students
- 91 YR 3 pharmacy students.
- Ninety one medical students were paired with pharmacy students to visit older adults in their homes.
- 111 medical students were assigned seniors by the project staff
- 166 medical students interviewed a senior of their choosing.

Prior to the Senior Home Visit

- Pre-test Aging Semantics Differential Scale (Rosencranz & McNevin, 1969)
- Viewed a geriatric lecture.

Questionnaires

Medical students assessed how four social domains i.e., social stress and support networks; change in environment; life control; and literacy affects an older adult’s quality of life

- *Social Context Review of Systems* questionnaire (adapted SCRoS, Green 2002)
- *Functional Evaluation: The Barthel Index*, 1965.

Pharmacy students assessed

- Medication use management including knowledge, skills, and affordability (*Assessment of Medication Management Skills Ruscini, 1996*) and
- Influence of social constructs on medication use.
- All students assessed Post-test Aging Semantics Differential Scale and Learning Survey.

RESULTS

The visit lasted between 45 minutes and an hour.

Social Constructs and Frailty of Seniors

- 71% of the seniors were able to function independently.
- 30% of seniors indicated STRESS as a cause of concerns.
- 30% of seniors had mobility problems.
- 27% of seniors reported needing assistance with grocery shopping.

Univariate Pre and Post Test of Aging Attitudes: Teams versus Non-teams					
Item	Reliability Cronbach’s α Pretest	Number of students	Pretest	Post Test	p
Autonomy Total items 8	0.83	186 non-team 182 team	27.49 28.50	27.02 26.85	.000
Acceptability Total items 7	0.82	186 non-team 182 team	21.84 22.53	21.52 21.57	.000
Instrumentality Total items 6	0.79	186 non-team 182 team	23.31 23.62	22.58 22.46	.000
Integrity Total items 5	0.85	186 non-team 182 team	16.92 17.15	16.25 16.37	.000

.Significant p ≤ .05 level; lower mean score represents improvement of attitudes towards aging

Student Opinions on Interdisciplinary Team Care & Senior Home Visit Experience (Interim Analysis)					
Opinions	Interdisciplinary Team Care			Experience	
	Treats seniors as a whole person	Improves senior care	Improves my professional success	Time devoted was worthwhile	Recommend program to other students
Strongly agree	12%	26%	58%	16%	13%
Moderately agree	38%	40%	27%	28%	25%
Somewhat agree	44%	24%	14%	27%	28%

DISCUSSION

- Geriatric training entails knowledge and skill acquisition and must promote positive attitudes towards the care of the older adult (*IOM April 2008*).
- Addresses the “Service Learning” medical school accreditation standard Liaison Committee on Medical Education (*LCME 2008*) and pharmacy accreditation requirements.
- Fosters interdisciplinary education and care.

CONCLUSIONS

- A home visit program with seniors allows time for conversations, while extending students’ experiential opportunities to practice functional assessment and medication use.
- A combined medical and pharmacy student home visit slightly improved students’ attitudes towards seniors.
- Students perceived benefits of interdisciplinary care on senior health outcomes as well as their own careers.