



Experiences in Teaching and Learning

Implementing and assessing an elective learning experience in medical missions for PGY-1 pharmacy residents

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Abstract

Objective: To implement and assess an elective learning experience in medical missions for postgraduate year one (PGY-1) pharmacy residents at the Lloyd L. Gregory School of Pharmacy.

Methods: Out of a total of six PGY-1 pharmacy residents who pursued the elective medical mission trip learning experience, five completed a survey evaluating the perceived value in spiritual and professional development, the benefit to the population served, as well as the benefit to the resident as a part of the learning experience.

Results: All participants reported high levels of satisfaction with their mission experience.

Conclusion: PGY-1 pharmacy residents were very satisfied with the elective learning experience in medical missions. We encourage residency directors and preceptors to incorporate such an elective into their programs.

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Keywords: Global health; Medical missions; Pharmacy residents

Introduction

At the Lloyd L. Gregory School of Pharmacy (GSOP), a center of excellence in medical missions was established to develop servant leaders who are indigent patient care advocates.^{1,2} Incorporated into the GSOP PGY-1 pharmacy residency program is an elective learning experience in medical missions where residents are afforded the unique opportunity to assist faculty members in leading a medical mission trip. This learning experience is designed to meet the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) accreditation standards for PGY-1 residency programs.³

According to the ASHP standards, residents should exercise leadership and gain experience in serving diverse

patient populations.³ The GSOP medical mission's elective learning experience meets this and other ASHP standards, and helps to achieve the GSOP mission to develop servant leaders who are patient care advocates. It also meets Palm Beach Atlantic University's (PBAU) mission, to prepare students for lifelong learning and leadership. This elective experience trains residents to solve problem and make clinical decisions in the setting of a foreign culture with limited resources. As the emphasis on global health training for medical professionals continues to gain momentum, the elective learning experience in medical missions at GSOP reinforces the movement of training pharmacists to be culturally competent, global health care advocates. The mission field serves as a ripe environment toward the achievement of these goals. This study assesses the utility of an unconventional learning experience for the professional development of residents.

The Global Health Education Consortium (GHEC) recommends that global health residency programs take into

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account the interrelated health disparity factors of medicine, environment, economic standpoints, such as affordability of health care or medications, political climate, and education.⁴ The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) and World Health Organization (WHO) recommend leading pharmacy educational initiatives with the goal of innovative and transformational education.^{5,6} Service-learning courses have found their place in pharmacy school curricula, and have allowed for the application of clinical knowledge while incorporating social responsibility, respect for diversity, and care for patients from ethical and sustainable standpoints.^{7–9}

The GSOP medical missions elective has sought to also encompass these health care facets in order to allow residents to develop a foundation in providing medical care to underserved populations in the context of language barriers, cost considerations, as well as cultural sensitivity.

The Purdue University College of Pharmacy Kenya Program is a PGY-1 residency that strives to produce leaders in resource-limited settings.¹⁰ Training experiences incorporate the Academic Model for Providing Access to Healthcare (AMPATH), where the resident can provide clinical services in more than 60 clinic sites and implement innovative sustainable health care through the expansion of pharmacy services. The GSOP has implemented a similar model to allow residents to set up and serve in multiple clinic sites to care for patients. The University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy also has a PGY2 residency program with an emphasis in underserved care and global health.¹¹ These residents deliver patient care through interprofessional collaboration in resource-limited environments. The GSOP residency has also fostered interprofessional care of patients in establishing relationships with local health care providers.

Studies evaluating rural physician retention noted that medical students who participated in rural curriculum and experiential learning were more likely to choose a career path in that setting.^{12–14} The GSOP residency has sought to expose residents to the health disparities and challenges in health care by promoting the rural provider career path. In addition, the residency program explores the roles of pharmacists who serve in governmental and civilian agencies [disaster medical assistance teams (DMAT), U.S. Public Health Service Commission Corps (USPHS), National Pharmacist Response Teams (NPRT)] in response to natural, industrial, or man-made disasters.^{15,16} While the GSOP mission trip does not serve as a group of assistance or response participants, residents gain similar experience in roles beyond dispensing.¹⁷

Methods

IRB approval

The study received approval from Palm Beach Atlantic University's Institutional Review Board and was supported by a Quality Initiative Grant from the university.

Participants

Eligible participants were PGY-1 pharmacy residents at GSOP. Participants had a Doctor of Pharmacy degree and a license to practice pharmacy in the state of Florida as required by the residency program.¹⁸ At the time of writing, eight pharmacists completed the GSOP residency program, of which six pursued the medical mission elective learning experience.

Materials

A 5-point Likert scale survey consisting of six questions was generated based on the goals of the mission trip and ASHP standards for PGY-1 residency programs to assess the residents' perceptions of the elective learning experience (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree). Areas assessed included benefits to the population served, evaluation of the spiritual care provided, professional and spiritual development as a pharmacist, and value gained as part of the residency program. The survey was distributed via hard copy and participation was anonymous.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS statistical software (version 21.0).¹⁹ An analysis was conducted to assess the reliability of the survey instrument in the sample population. Because of the small sample size, primary analyses included a series of descriptive statistics (computed for data summary purposes) and cross tabulations.

Design

Mission trips to various local and international locations are scheduled annually at GSOP. The GSOP has afforded opportunities for an elective learning experience in medical mission to Brazil, Belize, Bolivia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Taiwan, Uganda, and Zambia; and in the United States, to Alaska and Belle Glade, Florida. Pharmacy residents have traveled to Brazil, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic. Most trips occur in late May or early June.

In general, planning a mission trip involves fundraising, coordination with humanitarian organizations or missionaries, formulary generation, and logistical issues.^{20–22} Individuals who are interested in going on a mission trip, but are not able to cover the costs associated with the trip, may seek out benefactors to sponsor their trips. The GSOP is fortunate to have financial support from a benefactor program, where half of the trip cost for students is covered by the school. Costs associated with the mission trip include missionary or mission organization funding, medication and supply purchases, airfare, lodging, food, passport acquisition, and other essential travel items.

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