



Commentary

Benefits of a concentrated teaching rotation: Perspectives of pharmacy residents and faculty



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ABSTRACT

The postgraduate pharmacy residency experience requires residents to develop the proper skillset to not only provide optimal therapeutic management to patients, but to effectively deliver their knowledge to trainees and other health care providers. Without specific recommendations for how to achieve these skills, residents may hone their communication, organizational, and teaching skills through a number of different venues currently offered by residency programs nationwide. Residency programs commonly offer a longitudinal experience in order for residents to obtain didactic teaching skills; less often do programs offer a concentrated rotation dedicated to academia. Residents can acquire a number of skills from a focused academic rotation including curriculum development, career growth, and preceptorship by following a schedule that more closely mimics that of a clinical faculty member. These skills are typically more difficult to develop with a longitudinal experience due to time constraints and other resident and faculty member commitments. Prior to implementing this experience, the impact on both the resident and faculty member should be taken into consideration.

Introduction

Pharmacy residencies provide opportunities for the structured training of pharmacists in the areas of patient-care, medication-use systems, project-management, medical informatics, and leadership.¹ Outcomes of residency training published by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) identify the provision of medication and practice-related education and training as a key component of residency training.² As the ASHP guidance for postgraduate year 1 remains vague, residency programs are able to interpret the specified goals and incorporate training accordingly. Recently, the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) provided additional guidance to residency programs regarding specific teaching experiences for trainees and for the development of a teaching certificate program.³ These recommendations include exposure to teaching in a variety of settings, including delivering a formal lecture, developing a patient case, precepting or co-precepting students on rotation, and facilitating small-group discussion. Residency programs may satisfy these recommendations through either concentrated or longitudinal learning experiences. In a

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survey of University Health System Consortium (UHC) residency programs, Manasco et al.⁴ identified that a longitudinal learning experience was more common as only 36% of programs offered a concentrated teaching experience to residents.

A recently published study described pharmacy residents' interests in pursuing faculty positions following completion of their residency.⁵ This study found that 48% of surveyed residents were strongly interested in pursuing faculty positions upon entry to residency and 28% of residents applied to faculty positions at the conclusion of residency. Of 28% who chose to apply to faculty positions, 81% stated that their teaching experience during residency was a main driver for their interest. Despite the growing number of open faculty positions, the results of this study suggested that residents accepted fewer academic positions than were sought. Furthermore, 23% of residents who chose not to apply to academic positions did so because they felt unprepared for these roles.⁵ One factor shown to be positively correlated with attaining a faculty position post-residency was having been heavily involved in teaching a course at a college of pharmacy.⁵

Currently, pharmacy residents at the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) develop as educators through a required longitudinal teaching experience, as well as the optional completion of a teaching certificate. The requirements for the certificate include longitudinal teaching experiences, delivery of at least two didactic lectures, participation in monthly teaching series discussions, completion of continuing education courses focused on precepting, and involvement in college of pharmacy admissions interviews. Longitudinal teaching experiences are completed through serving as an instructor for a semester-long, weekly course. With the recent implementation of a curriculum that heavily emphasizes active learning, resident responsibilities in these courses involve developing and implementing problem-based learning experiences and facilitating small-group discussions or laboratory work in pharmaceutical care, self-care, and the therapeutics sequence. While our longitudinal experience allows residents to lead recitation sections and topic discussions, the opportunity to gain a more in depth understanding of academia and experience in a variety of academic roles is limited. Given the high level of interest in pursuing faculty positions and the correlation between having meaningful teaching experiences and accepting faculty positions after residency, faculty member preceptors within our residency program developed a concentrated teaching rotation, which provides unique opportunities to allow residents to further develop as educators.

This structured, concentrated teaching rotation is offered as a month-long rotation precepted by clinical, non-tenure track faculty affiliated with the UMHS and the College of Pharmacy. The concentrated rotation emphasizes large group and didactic teaching experiences, working with students outside of the classroom, and understanding numerous responsibilities of a non-tenure track faculty member. Completion of the concentrated rotation may serve to more fully inform residents' understanding of academic positions and better prepare residents to succeed in those positions, whereas this may not be fully appreciated with the completion of the longitudinal experience.

Resident perspective

As a resident, completion of a concentrated teaching rotation provides opportunities that are often not feasible during longitudinal teaching experiences. Pharmacy residents pursuing postgraduate residency training at large academic medical centers affiliated with colleges of pharmacy frequently have an interest in pursuing careers in academia.⁵ Nonetheless, an understanding of the role of different faculty members is frequently limited upon entry into residency. A concentrated rotation allows residents to gain understanding regarding the multifaceted responsibilities of clinical faculty positions by having a schedule parallel to that of a non-tenure track faculty member. This insight regarding the expectations and commitment of faculty members to a college of pharmacy may not be realized during longitudinal teaching rotations due to time constraints and learning experience structure. Unique opportunities available to residents during a concentrated rotation include the ability to foster didactic teaching skills, immerse themselves more fully in student experiences, engage in teaching and academia-based topic discussions, and attend faculty development activities (Table). Throughout these experiences, residents benefit from collaborating with a preceptor and mentor who is dedicated to teaching.

Although didactic teaching is a component of both longitudinal and concentrated teaching experiences, during a concentrated rotation residents are able to devote additional time to observation, practice, and evaluation of different didactic teaching techniques. Observation of didactic teaching allows residents to assess classroom structure, identify effective teaching strategies, and determine effective learning evaluation tools. During a concentrated rotation, residents are able to spend additional time each week engaged in didactic teaching, which allows for the development of teaching styles and classroom rapport. Furthermore, the ability to reserve time for regular feedback and evaluation of performance encourages resident self-evaluation and growth.

In addition to the didactic skills gained in the classroom, residents are also able to build stronger relationships with students and other instructors through a concentrated experience. Immersing the resident in all aspects of students' learning for an entire month allows the resident to participate in managing difficult student situations that may be unrecognized or beyond the scope of a more limited, longitudinal experience. In addition, this experience allows residents to engage with students outside of designated classroom hours through holding office hours and focused learning sessions. Similar to faculty members who are involved with students through organizations and events, students become more comfortable approaching residents to participate in these additional precepting activities, and residents maintain a schedule that mimics the demands, expectations, and opportunities available for full time faculty members.

Additionally, a concentrated teaching rotation allows residents to devote time to topic discussions regarding student learning, precepting, teaching strategies, academic evaluation, and faculty development. Understanding of these subjects is essential for the development of residents as educators and practitioners in an academic medical center. Furthermore, topic discussions can lend insight into the types of faculty positions available, as well as important considerations of roles and expectations of practitioners

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