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Opinion

A leadership journal club for officers of a professional organization for pharmacy students

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to describe the implementation of a leadership journal club (LJC) for officers of a professional organization for pharmacy students. In 2012 and 2013, the faculty advisors of a Student Society of Health-System Pharmacy chapter coordinated a LJC to increase leadership development in the officers. Participants met for six sessions, approximately once a month over six months, to discuss articles in six leadership concept areas. Perceptions of the LJC were assessed with a questionnaire that included 13 Likert-scale items and two open-ended questions. A majority of participants evaluated each Likert-scale item positively. Open-ended feedback indicated that most participants enjoyed discussions with their peers, but some felt that the topics were repetitive. It was concluded that a LJC was well received by officers of a professional organization for pharmacy students.

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Introduction

The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) and the American Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) have emphasized the need to increase leadership development in pharmacists, residents, and pharmacy students. In 2005, an ASHP report concluded that a significant leadership gap in pharmacy was expected in five to ten years and that new methods for fostering leaders should be pursued.¹ In 2013, a seven-year follow-up assessment was reported, which concluded that despite the many advances, the potential for a leadership crisis within the next ten years still exists and that new initiatives continue to be in demand.² The need to increase leadership development for the profession has also been emphasized in the ACPE guidelines. In Standard 23, faculty are required to commit to fostering leadership in students, which may involve supporting opportunities for

them to participate in self-government as well as local, state, and national professional organizations.³ Thus, in recent years, a focus on leadership development efforts has been occurring among both clinicians and academicians in pharmacy practice.

Several of the leadership development efforts involving pharmacy students have been published. In 2005, Tran et al.⁴ described a program that involved three days of workshops over three months to teach basic leadership skills to selected students from three pharmacy schools. In 2007, Juergens and Wilson⁵ described a program that involved five discussions of leadership issues over one year with pharmacy students serving in various officer positions at The University of Mississippi. At the University of Minnesota, a two-credit leadership elective course and a 28-hour leadership retreat were developed for pharmacy students. Their efforts evolved into an 18-credit emphasis area in leadership that students can elect to pursue.^{6,7} At the University of Iowa College of Pharmacy, a continuing professional development tool for developing leadership skills has been described, in addition to a flexible-credit leadership elective course.^{8,9} And recently, a one-year leadership program for pharmacy student leaders at Drake

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University was described by Chesnut and Tran-Johnson.¹⁰ A variety of assessments have been used for these efforts, including multiple-choice tests, peer evaluations, course evaluations, and pre and/or post self-assessments, and all have indicated an improvement in the students' knowledge or perception of their leadership abilities.^{4–10} Thus, such leadership efforts seem to be successful and many others likely exist, but the degree to which pharmacy students are exposed to them is dependent on the varying opportunities at their institutions.

Leadership development for pharmacy residents has started to be addressed in the literature more recently. In 2011, pharmacy residency program directors were encouraged to provide training in leadership, in addition to the clinical areas commonly emphasized, and to develop leadership certificate programs, similar to the more common teaching certificate programs.^{11,12} In 2012, a leadership book club was briefly described for residents and other pharmacy staff at a hospital in Minnesota.¹³ Additionally, discussions of 36 articles over six months were described as one of five aspects of a leadership development series for eight pharmacy residents at The Nebraska Medical Center.¹⁴ Though neither of these programs was formally assessed and the literature on leadership development efforts among pharmacy residents is currently limited, it is expected to grow and become stronger in the future.

In response to the recommendation from ASHP to increase exposure to leadership principles among pharmacists and pharmacy residents, Wombwell et al.¹⁵ published an article on how to develop a leadership journal club (LJC) for new practitioners in 2011. The suggested format was similar in structure to a clinically oriented journal club, but rather than critically evaluating a research study's design, a LJC would involve reading published literature on various leadership principles and discussing personal thoughts and experiences on the subject with a small group of peers. At the time, the faculty advisors of the Student Society of Health-System Pharmacy (SSHP) chapter at Midwestern University College of Pharmacy-Glendale (MWU CPG) were considering ways to improve leadership training in the organization and decided that a LJC could be established for the officers. No specific information on a LJC within the field of pharmacy was found in a literature search.

The goal of the LJC was to improve the leadership skills of the officers. By doing so, the entire SSHP chapter could be strengthened, and the skills that the officers developed could provide lifelong benefits. To identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program, an assessment of three objectives suggested by Wombwell et al.,¹⁵ in addition to other perceptions about the experience, was conducted. The objective of this article is to describe the implementation of the LJC for officers of the SSHP chapter at MWU CPG.

Design

At MWU CPG, 10–11 students are elected into officer positions within the SSHP chapter annually at the beginning

of the third quarter of the three-year curriculum. Because participating in a LJC would be a new activity for the officers, the concept was presented to all SSHP members prior to elections. After elections, the faculty advisors met with the President to determine the structure.

In the article by Wombwell et al.,¹⁵ six leadership concept areas were identified: defining leadership, leadership development, compassionate leading, managerial development, creating change, and resident-specific learning. In order to cover each concept area, six sessions were planned, with the goal of approximately one session per month, each lasting for one hour over lunch, from December through May. This time period correlated to the third and fourth quarters of the curriculum, when the newly elected officers had the fewest other SSHP responsibilities, and allowed for completion prior to students being away from campus for introductory pharmacy practice experiences in the fifth quarter. Although the article recommended one facilitator for the entire series, it was decided to alternate facilitators for each session to give all officers a more active role in the process. The President would facilitate the first session and one to two of the other officers would facilitate each of remaining sessions so that each officer would be responsible for facilitating one session during the series.

For each leadership concept area, at least three recommended articles with supplementary material for facilitators (e.g., discussion questions, follow-up points, and take-home points) were listed on the ASHP website. In 2012, the facilitators were asked to choose a leadership concept area of interest and select one article with supplementary material from the ASHP website. In 2013, an attempt to use more recently published literature was made based on feedback received during the first year; thus, the facilitators were given articles selected by the faculty advisors in the leadership concept area of interest and instructed to prepare discussion questions on their own. On the day of the session, the facilitators were expected to lead the discussion, encouraging all officers to share opinions and personal experiences, and the faculty advisors were prepared to help if needed. No formal structure beyond this was provided. The articles to be discussed were announced to all officers at least one week prior to the session to provide sufficient time for reading and reflection. Though the LJC was not stated as a requirement of the officers, they were encouraged to attend all sessions by the faculty advisors and the President.

Evaluation

Overall, 21 officers participated in the LJC (11 in 2012 and 10 in 2013). In both years, 100% of officers either facilitated or co-facilitated at least one session. In 2012, four sessions were held during the third and fourth quarters and two sessions were held during the sixth quarter of the curriculum; attendance was 100% at four sessions, 82% at

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