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Short communication

Assessing the value of a pharmacy student first aid volunteer experience at a large-venue sporting event

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Abstract

Objective: To describe and assess pharmacy students' perceived value of volunteering at first aid stations during University of Florida home football games.

Design: Volunteer pharmacy students were assigned to first aid stations during home football games to assist the first aid personnel with patient care and incident documentation.

Assessment: A total of 36 students participated in the volunteer opportunity, of which 75% and 72% completed the pre- and post-survey instrument, respectively. In all categories, the students' confidence improved significantly from pre- to post-intervention survey. Their confidence improved the most in communicating with first aid personnel ($p < 0.0001$), providing assistance to first aid personnel ($p < 0.0001$), and in recognizing a patient who is dehydrated ($p = 0.0004$)

Conclusion: Students volunteering in first aid stations at University of Florida home football games showed a significant improvement in their confidence in participating in patient care activities and recognizing patients experiencing a medical emergency.

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Keywords: Emergency care; Large-event medicine; Pharmacy student; First aid; First response

Introduction

Pharmacists are one of the most accessible health care providers. It is estimated that nearly all Americans live within five miles of a community pharmacy.¹ Beyond proximity, pharmacists have become the poster child for neighborhood health care because they are one of the most trusted health care professionals.² While the majority of pharmacists work in a community pharmacy setting, about one-quarter work in hospitals and other health care facilities in a clinical or consultant role.³ In either setting, it is

probable that at some point in his/her pharmacy career, a pharmacist may encounter a person experiencing a medical emergency.

The American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy's (AACCP) Center for Advancement of Pharmaceutical Education (CAPE) publishes educational outcomes to ensure that colleges of pharmacy maintain evolving curriculum that are consistent with pharmacists' expanding roles.^{4–6} The 2007 Pharmacy Practice Educational Outcomes defined the skills required to provide patient-centered pharmaceutical care, while the 2013 CAPE Education Outcomes expand on these, emphasizing that current and future pharmacists are expected to be interprofessional collaborators, patient advocates, health and wellness promoters, and health care providers.^{5,6} Similarly, the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC) published core competencies for interprofessional collaborative practice that include four

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domains: (1) values/ethics for interprofessional practice, (2) roles/responsibilities, (3) interprofessional communication, and (4) teams and teamwork.⁷ While these concepts are the fundamental building blocks for any pharmacy curriculum, the challenge arises in how to provide students with meaningful real-world patient care experiences, especially for low-occurring high-risk situations like medical emergencies. The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) encourages faculty and preceptors to implement active learning strategies to overcome some of these challenges through the utilization of laboratory experiences, simulations, case studies, and other practice-based exercises.⁵

To prepare pharmacy students for medical emergencies, students are often required to complete basic life support (BLS) training, which incorporates case-based simulation exercises. Some pharmacy programs may expand on BLS training by utilizing high-fidelity simulators⁸ or human actors in order to train students for a variety of emergency situations. For example, pharmacy students at Washington State University College of Pharmacy had to utilize patient assessment techniques to determine if the simulated patient was experiencing one of five emergency scenarios: acute asthma attack, hypoglycemia, medication-related allergic reaction, myocardial infarction, or stroke.⁸ These types of strategies require students to apply their knowledge from their coursework, while providing the opportunity to correct any deficiencies prior to real-world situations. Moreover, these situations attempt to teach students how to think critically under pressure, such as during a complex or emergency medical situation. Such simulations have been shown to effectively train students to recognize emergency situations, utilize communication and assessment techniques, and work as a team in a low-risk environment; however, they can be limited by their inability to incorporate unpredictable factors like environment, resources, a patient's cognitive state, and human nature. Therefore, an additional modality for learning is through opportunities gained outside of the pharmacy curriculum. We have found no evidence in the literature where pharmacy students were utilized as volunteers in first aid stations at mass attendance events, which can present students with many opportunities beyond the curriculum and their rotation experiences.

In summer 2010, the University of Florida Athletic Association (UAA) was looking for volunteers to help supplement the first aid personnel that operate the first aid stations during home football games. Large-venue sporting events create a very unique environment for health care delivery. Every fall, the University of Florida football team plays home football games that are attended by >90,000 fans, and an additional 30,000–50,000 more people who come on campus but do not actually attend the game. In a typical year, there are seven such games. For the city of Gainesville, Florida (population ~200,000 people), this mass influx of individuals taxes the health care resources of the city and Alachua county where the city resides. First aid

personnel are provided via contract with Alachua County Fire Rescue (ACFR). For approximately six hours before, during, and after the game, EMTs and/or paramedics staff each of the eight first aid stations in the stadium, with additional units assigned to mobile vehicles within the stadium for rescue and transport. Historically the ACFR personnel were supplemented by volunteers from the ACFR reserve corps or American Red Cross volunteers. However by 2009, these options were no longer available. Concern was raised at this time that due to the lack of personnel, the current ACFR personnel did not have adequate time to document accidents when they occurred because their primary concern and effort was spent on patient care. This left the UAA's risk management office short on documentation, and ultimately the UAA exposed. When the needs of the UAA came to be known to the college of pharmacy, an idea was formed about the possibility of utilizing pharmacy students as volunteers in the first aid stations.

In summer 2010, pharmacy students who were interested and willing to participate in the pilot program were recruited. Students were not restricted based on their progress through their degree program. Students who had a community service requirement could receive credit for their participation. That first year there were 35 students who volunteered for the opportunity. After a successful pilot in 2010 it was decided that the value of the program should be assessed in order to quantify what impact, if any, the program had on the students and ACFR personnel, as well as, to define opportunities for improvement. The purpose of this project was to describe and assess student's perceptions of their experience, and the perceptions of the ACFR personnel regarding the student's presence. This article will focus on the former.

Materials and methods

In summer of 2011, University of Florida's College of Pharmacy students were invited via e-mail to participate in the program. Students from all classes and campuses of the college were included. Students were advised of the liabilities to volunteering, including the difficult working environment (heat, difficult patients, and potential exposure to biological fluids) and the inability to participate in the game-day activities as a fan. Students were surveyed electronically to determine their availability for each home football game. The results of the poll were used by the faculty advisors to assign the students to the football game(s).

All University of Florida College of Pharmacy students are required to be BLS certified. In addition to the certification, the students were required to attend a two-hour orientation prior to the start of the home football season. The orientation was facilitated by the faculty advisors and members of the University Athletic Association's Risk Management Department. The orientation included a brief history of the program, the purpose of the Risk Management Department and the role of the first aid personnel, responsibilities, and expectations of the students (attire, time commitment, etc.), a review of the

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