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Short communication

Jamaican a difference: A grassroots approach by pharmacy students to develop an international service learning experience

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Abstract

Objective: To describe the implementation process of an international mission trip led by a pharmacy student and its acceptance as an introductory pharmacy practice experience (IPPE) at the University of Rhode Island.

Methods: Mustard Seed Communities (MSC), a non-profit, Catholic organization, was selected as the mission sponsor by the student leader based on previous travel experience on non-medical missions. Educational needs of the specific communities were identified and included medication management, basic physical assessment, and treatment of human immunodeficiency-infected pediatric patients. A mission team established by the student leader a year prior to travel worked to develop educational resources and fundraise. Faculty created a post-mission, student survey based on Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) criteria for an IPPE to assess the acceptability of the pharmacy mission as an approved international service learning experience.

Results: Three workshops were delivered to the MSC caregivers by 11 pharmacy students and a pediatric faculty member. Educational sessions and interactions with children and caregivers gave students opportunities to provide medication counseling and expand their drug knowledge. Survey outcomes demonstrated ACPE service learning and pre-Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) skills guidelines, including communication, counseling, and medication information, and were satisfied.

Conclusion: The implementation of an international service learning experience in the curriculum was successful. Through a student-led mission, pharmacy students were able to foster IPPE practice-based skills by working with the MSC children and caregivers.

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Introduction

The benefits of medical trips in education have been well established, for both the missionaries and the communities they service.^{1–20} Public health objectives are incorporated in the curriculum guidelines through the 2013 Center for the

Advancement of Pharmacy Education (CAPE) educational outcomes, and a call for action has gone out in the pharmacy community.^{21,22} Schools and colleges of pharmacy have developed international clinical experiences; however, most experiences have been interdisciplinary in nature, as well as, part of Advanced Practice Pharmacy Experience (APPE) credit.^{5,10–14} Purdue University College of Pharmacy has established an APPE site in Kenya, with a full-time faculty member residing in Kenya to serve as a dual preceptor for both Purdue and University of Nairobi pharmacy students, providing a bilateral educational

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exchange.¹⁰ Ohio Northern University Raabe College of Pharmacy described their elective course implementation and travels to Kenya through the SHARE-Kenya program instated by the osteopathic medicine department years prior.^{11,12} Additionally, the pharmacy school at St. John Fisher College has published their experiences with a faith-based mission elective course for course credit.¹³ At the University of Rhode Island College of Pharmacy, there are limited international pharmacy experiences, and none within introductory pharmacy practice.

A total of 11 pharmacy students and a faculty member from the University of Rhode Island (URI) embarked on a pharmacy mission experience to the Mustard Seed Communities (MSC), a non-profit, Catholic organization in Jamaica. This mission was pioneering as it was one of the first international pharmacy experiences for URI students. The call of the mission was to serve children with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and other complex pediatric diseases. The experience was completely voluntary for both pharmacy students and faculty as no formal association with the College of Pharmacy and MSC existed at the time of the mission's development. Additionally, a third professional (P3)-year student spearheaded the mission as she provided the organization of the group, development of the curriculum, and oversaw the details of the collaboration with MSC. Though an unconventional method to develop a pharmacy education mission, the common denominator of helping others brought together a diverse group of students and faculty with the intent to champion the National Commission of Service Learning's definition of service learning (a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities).²³

Background

Mustard Seed Communities cares for over 600 disabled and abandoned children among 14 orphanages within Zimbabwe, Nicaragua, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic. The largest of the MSC is in Kingston, Jamaica, with several homes that provide care to almost 400 children, including pregnant adolescents and their infants, children with HIV/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS),

epilepsy, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism, and other pediatric chronic diseases (Table). A heavy burden of medical care and medication administration is associated with providing care to the children of the MSC. Caregivers of the MSC are not trained medical professionals or first-aid certified. They are community members whom MSC employs to care for the children. They receive minimal training, generally by other caregivers. The challenges of caring for children with special needs require that caregivers be adequately trained in medication management and basic physical assessment skills.²⁴

All pharmacy students enrolled at the University of Rhode Island are required to complete Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experiences (IPPE) based on the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) Accreditation Standards and Guidelines.²⁵ A total of 300 hours must be completed from four different areas, including service learning, community practice, institutional practice, and laboratory simulation to meet those requirements.²⁶ Currently, service learning is a one-credit course offered to students upon completing their first professional year (P1) with experiences at health care-related organizations, such as assisted living facilities, hospitals, nursing homes, and non-profit health clinics within the state of Rhode Island and other New England states. Nominations for new sites must be approved by the Office of Experiential Education at the College of Pharmacy to ensure that criteria for service learning are met. Per Appendix C of the ACPE Accreditation Standards and Guidelines, activities for service learning should meet a community need, enhance a relationship between the community and academic institution, foster civic responsibility and development of a sense of caring for others, provide opportunities for interaction with other health care professionals, and extend student learning beyond the classroom.²⁵ Additionally, Appendix D also provides a guide for student competencies that should be met during the didactic and IPPE curriculum.²⁵

The primary aim of this article is to describe the development and execution of a student-led international pharmacy mission trip. The secondary aim is to demonstrate how the mission experience based upon CAPE educational outcomes and ACPE guidelines meets IPPE requirements for service learning through students' perceptions of the

Table

Summary of pediatric patient interactions and caregiver education during mission experience

Commonly encountered diseases	Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy (MD), scoliosis, Hutchinson–Gilford Progeria Syndrome (HGPS), Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), autism, epilepsy, developmental delay, microcephaly, and HIV/AIDS
Average number of patient interactions per day (total)	50 (300)
Workshop education	Medication administration demonstration, drug information resource review, medication administration recording, physical assessment (blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate, and temperature), medication compliance, pediatric HIV/AIDS, and treatment
Average number of caregivers educated per workshop (total)	30 (100)

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