

Research

Use of student pharmacist peer feedback during a journal club in an advanced in pharmacy practice experience

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Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this study was to evaluate the use of peer feedback during a journal club by student pharmacists during an advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE). We hypothesized that students providing constructive feedback to their peers would positively affect learning.

Methods: Students from two different universities and three different APPE practice specialties participated in the study. Students received training on providing constructive feedback and then provided written and verbal feedback to their peers after their journal club presentations. Students were then surveyed on this experience.

Results: Forty-three APPE students completed the study. Students reported the activity positively affected their ability to evaluate and provide feedback to peers. The students also stated the experience positively promoted their growth and learning.

Conclusions: This APPE activity provided an opportunity to learn how to provide constructive feedback. Activities should be created at schools of pharmacy that engage students while teaching ways to provide quality feedback.

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When student pharmacists transition into a pharmacist role, they are often required to provide performance feedback to individuals under their supervision. This may include pharmacy technicians, student pharmacists that they precept, and even other pharmacists. Based on the limited data in the literature, it is likely that many colleges of pharmacy do not provide formal training on peer evaluation in their curricula. Historically, our own colleges have not offered such training. This disconnect of learning experiences as a student and expectations as a pharmacist in the

workforce may possibly cause young pharmacists to struggle when providing feedback to peers or those under their supervision. This likely results in frustration for both those providing and receiving feedback. In a survey of pharmacy students and preceptors, Sonthisombat suggested that some pharmacist preceptors might overestimate the quality of their teaching behaviors compared with student evaluation, particularly in the area of feedback.¹

The American Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) Standards require multidimensional assessment of pharmacy students' skills and behavior.² Standard 15 of this document addresses the assessment and evaluation of student learning and mentions the inclusion of preceptor, faculty, and self-assessments. In addition, peer evaluation and assessment has also been described as a successful tool for providing student feedback in education literature.³ Additional studies have suggested that peer assessment is useful among medical students and is accepted and valued by

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resident physicians.^{4,5} In fact, peer assessment has even been described among board-certified internists as a practical way to evaluate humanistic qualities and communication skills in the clinical setting.⁶ Peer assessment has been analyzed among pharmacy students at various levels of the pharmacy curriculum with variable success.^{7–11}

Observation of performance by peers can be important because students tend to observe a different set of skills compared with faculty.¹² A possible added benefit to peer assessment is that a student may gain valuable insight into the proper assessment process.¹³ This is often seen as beneficial by students and creates an opportunity for critical self-reflection that may eventually allow a student to improve his or her self-assessment skills.^{3,14}

In the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACCP) Center for the Advancement of Pharmaceutical Education (CAPE) Education Outcomes from 2004, an emphasis is placed on the ability of students to “retrieve, analyze, and interpret the professional, lay, and scientific literature to provide drug information” to various stakeholders, including patients and other health care providers.¹⁵ “Journal clubs” are designed to meet this outcome and are a common exercise during advanced pharmacy practice experiences (APPE). The delivery of journal clubs allows students to acquire further knowledge of the respective medical condition, to learn critical literature evaluation skills, and to enhance presentation skills.¹⁶ The evaluation of this process is also of great importance to student learning. Blommel and Abate developed and refined a rubric scale to adequately and effectively evaluate second- through fourth-year doctor of pharmacy students’ journal club presentations.¹⁷

Rationale and objectives

The purpose of this paper is to describe the impact of peer evaluation during an APPE journal club exercise. We hypothesized that student learning would be positively affected by participating in a journal club component of peer feedback and anticipated that this experience would positively influence students’ ability to provide constructive feedback. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to (1) evaluate the effectiveness of peer evaluation in APPEs as a way to promote student growth and learning, (2) assess student perceptions of their ability to provide feedback, (3) consider the impact on learning when evaluated in journal club by peers, (4) gauge the impact of verbal feedback in journal club by peers compared with faculty preceptors, and (5) evaluate the impact of participating in journal club with peers from other colleges of pharmacy and practice specialties.

Materials and methods

This study was a prospective analysis of pharmacy students completing a journal club during their APPE at Broad-

Table 1
APPE rotation and journal club timeline

Week 1
● Study explained to students ● Students decide whether they would like to participate ● Consent obtained by preceptors
Week 2
● All students participate in a training session on giving constructive feedback ● Half of students deliver a journal club presentation. All other students will have read the article before the session to engage in discussion ● All students evaluate the presenter using the Journal Club Presentation Evaluation Rubric ● Students are paired with other students from a different university or specialty rotation; one student provides verbal feedback to each presenting student after the completion of the journal clubs
Week 4
● Second half of students deliver a journal club presentation ● Student who was evaluated at week 2 in the pair becomes the evaluator and provides feedback to the presenter
Week 5
● Survey given to students

lawn Medical Center in Des Moines, IA. The study was designed using Fink’s taxonomy of Significant Learning, specifically to affect human dimension (i.e., learning about oneself and others); integration (i.e., connecting ideas, people, and realms of life); and application (i.e., critical thinking skills and managing projects).¹⁸ All students completing an APPE at Broadlawn Medical Center from August 2009 to May 2010 ($n = 43$) were enrolled in the study. Pharmacy students participating in the study attended either the University of Iowa College of Pharmacy or Drake University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences and were assigned a rotation experience in ambulatory care, internal medicine, or psychiatry with a faculty member from one of these colleges of pharmacy. There were ten 5-week rotation cycles with three to eight students completing the experience with their faculty preceptors (who were also the investigators of the study). A timeline of the 5-week experience is detailed in Table 1. The journal club presentations occurred on the second and fourth week of each rotation block and all students attended each presentation. Before the journal club activity, all students participating in the study received a feedback instruction session in the form of a lecture and discussion from faculty on techniques to provide meaningful feedback (Appendix 1). The short lecture concluded with a discussion by preceptors and students of their past experiences, personal strategies, social differences in evaluating a peer (compared with someone under their authority), and other thoughts regarding quality feedback. For example, the Johari Window was one model used in the discussion to depict the aspects of feedback. This depicts a four paned “window” (see Appendix 1) that divides personal awareness into different types, presented by four

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