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Evaluation of a mock interview session on residency interview skills

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ABSTRACT

Background and purpose: To evaluate the impact of student pharmacist participation in a mock interview session on confidence level and preparation regarding residency interview skills.

Educational activity and setting: The study setting was a mock interview session, held in conjunction with student programming at the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) Annual Meeting. Prior to the mock interview session, final year student pharmacists seeking residency program placement were asked to complete a pre-session survey assessing confidence level for residency interviews. Each student pharmacist participated in up to three mock interviews. A post-session survey evaluating confidence level was then administered to consenting participants. Following the American Society for Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) Pharmacy Resident Matching Program (RMP), a post-match electronic survey was sent to study participants to determine their perception of the influence of the mock interview session on achieving successful interactions during residency interviews.

Findings: A total of 59 student pharmacists participated in the mock interview session and completed the pre-session survey. Participants completing the post-session survey (88%, n = 52) unanimously reported an enhanced confidence in interviewing skills following the session. Thirty responders reported a program match rate of 83%. Approximately 97% (n = 29) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the questions asked during the mock interview session were reflective of questions asked during residency interviews.

Discussion: Lessons learned from this mock interview session can be applied to PGY1 residency mock interview sessions held locally, regionally, and nationally.

Summary: Students participating in the ACCP Mock Interview Session recognized the importance of the interview component in obtaining a postgraduate year 1 (PGY1) pharmacy residency.

Background and purpose

The recognition of the value of formal postgraduate training by major pharmacy organizations and the evolving role of pharmacists in direct patient care likely influence student pharmacists to pursue residency and fellowship training.¹ Compared with previous research, surveyed pharmacy residents and fellows indicate that they understood [it] as a prerequisite for certain jobs when questioned about motivating factors for pursuing residency and fellowship training.¹ Despite the increasing number of residency

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programs and positions over the last several years, pharmacy residency program placement continues to be highly competitive, resulting in a large number of unmatched candidates annually.² Nationwide, the success rate of securing a postgraduate year 1 (PGY1) residency was approximately 64% in 2014.² A focus on residency application and interview preparation efforts has been occurring among both clinicians and academicians in pharmacy practice in recent years.

A survey study by Dunn et al.³ found that colleges of pharmacy have a variety of informal programs and/or information sessions in place (lecture seminars, panel discussions, small group activities) promoting residency training. Recent efforts have also focused on residency interview preparation. Data has indicated that a higher number of interview offers may increase the likelihood of an applicant to match with a PGY1 program.⁴ The interview component of the application provides an opportunity for residency program directors and preceptors to gather holistic information, such as nonacademic qualities of candidates, not otherwise evident from the application packet.⁵⁻⁷ Several interview preparation efforts have been published.

In 2012, Phillips et al.⁸ described an elective course using a variety of teaching methods (short lectures, group discussions, mock match, and mock interview) at the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy. Post-semester surveys (n = 36) demonstrated a statistically significant increase in students' abilities to not only understand the purpose and components of a residency training program, but also the actual steps in the residency application process. Student participation within residency application preparation sessions also appears to have a positive correlation with the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) Resident Matching Program (RMP) match rates. In 2012, Caballero et al.⁹ described a residency interviewing preparatory seminar elective at Nova Southeastern University College of Pharmacy with five of the ten course hours dedicated to interview preparation. Survey results demonstrate improvement in students' (n = 10) confidence and ability to interview and prepare for the ASHP Midyear Clinical Meeting (MCM). Seven of ten students (70%) participating within the elective secured ASHP-accredited residencies. At Drake University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, a faculty-led mock residency interview exercise was described by Koenigsfeld et al.¹⁰ Twenty-seven (of 28) students participated in a post-ASHP RMP survey, with 25 (92.6%) indicating they had secured a residency position. Recently, Rider et al.¹¹ described a collaborative approach to residency preparation programming between students and faculty from The Ohio State University College of Pharmacy and pharmacy residents and residency preceptors from The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. Of the four programming components (Curriculum Vitae Critique, Mock Residency Interviews, Residency 101, and Midyear to Match), Mock Residency Interviews received the highest ranking, in terms of value, by students completing an anonymous post-programming survey (n = 57). There were 26 survey participants seeking a residency and 20 of these (77%) obtained a position.

The Education and Training (EDTR) Practice and Research Network (PRN) of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) was developed to provide an opportunity to network with others who share similar interests and to work collaboratively to develop programs and projects to advance pharmacy education and training. Each year since 2004, the EDTR PRN holds a mock interview session at ACCP's Annual Meeting. The purpose of the mock interview session is to provide current student pharmacists seeking PGY1 residency positions, PGY1 pharmacy residents seeking PGY2 residency positions, or residents and fellows seeking employment the opportunity to participate in mock interviews with an ACCP member. Interviewers are typically active ACCP members who are seasoned practitioners and educators. Additionally, many are also PGY1 or PGY2 directors representing various residency programs in the United States.

No specific information on a mock interview session conducted at a national level was found in the literature. Thus, the purpose of this research was to evaluate the impact of final year student pharmacist participation in the mock interview session on confidence level and self-reported preparedness regarding residency interviewing skills. In addition, this study set out to explore if an improvement in confidence and preparedness for interviews correlated with ASHP RMP applicant match rates.

Educational activity and setting

Advertisement of the program

Student pharmacists, residents, and fellows who attended the 2014 ACCP Annual Meeting were eligible to participate in the mock interview session. Interested participants were made aware of the mock interview session via advertisements on the electronic registration webpage for the Annual Meeting, flyers handed to pharmacist trainees at the meeting registration booth, and verbal announcements made to students who attended the national meeting residency preparatory session. The Student College of Clinical Pharmacy (SCCP) chapters of ACCP at schools and colleges of pharmacy in the United States were also provided with information regarding the mock interview session to share with their student members.

Recruitment of interviewers began approximately one month prior to the Annual Meeting via email. The email request came directly from many PRN chairs and/or vice chairs, requesting volunteers from within their PRN membership. Volunteers were eligible to participate as an interviewer if the member was a pharmacist or pharmacy educator. To maximize the student's experience within the mock interview session, the study aimed to recruit an equal number of volunteer interviewers to student participants. To recognize the need to recruit a large number of interviewers, the time commitment involved in interviewing, and the opportunities for networking missed by interviewers who could not attend other PRN sessions during the same time slot, interviewer participation was supported in various ways. In addition to recruitment by PRN leadership and members, interviewers attending the mock interview session were encouraged to enter into a raffle for one of two gift cards in the amount of \$50.

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