Use of Academic Success Plans in Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences:

Promoting Self-Awareness

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Introduction

Formative and summative assessment of Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) students’ performance is required according to Appendix 2: Expectations within the APPE Curriculum of the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education Standards 20161. The University of Georgia College of Pharmacy (UGA COP) and Mercer University College of Pharmacy (MU COP), two member schools of the Southeastern Pharmacy Experiential Education Consortium, utilize a standard evaluation tool for student and preceptor APPE assessments. Students’ competency in 12 learning objectives is assessed by preceptors at the midpoint and conclusion of each APPE using the following scale: Exceeds Expectations, Competent, Needs Development, Needs Significant Development, Remediation Required. It was noted by the Office of Experiential Education (OEE) at both Colleges that some students may be repeatedly receiving preceptor scores of “needs development” in the same learning objective(s) without this triggering an intervention from the OEE, since these students typically received average or above average final scores. To address this issue, a process was developed for students to be assigned and complete an academic success plan (ASP) when recurrent performance deficiencies were noted. ASPs are a formal process for reflecting on experiential competencies and performance and creating an individualized plan for improvement.

Design

During the 2014-2015 APPE year, students were assigned ASPs by the OEE based on the following pre-determined criteria: 1) “needs development” was documented by preceptors for the same learning objective during more than one APPE, 2) on a case-by-case basis for documented professionalism issues such as excessive tardiness, lack of professional dress, etc, and 3) poor overall performance during an APPE as determined by the OEE. Excessive tardiness was defined as two or more preceptor-reported tardies during an APPE. ASPs were sent to students with the
appropriate behavior or competency pre-
inserted into a text document (Figure 1).
Students were then required to self-identify
the 1) reasons for the performance deficien-
cy, 2) the specific actions they would take to
correct the deficiency, and a 3) timeline of
when each portion of their plan would be
enacted. The tenets of SMART goal-setting
were encouraged to ensure plans were
achievable. ASPs were returned by the stu-
dent to the OEE and reviewed for comple-
tion and appropriateness of the student’s
plan. Though ASPs were assigned and re-
quired by OEE faculty, they were not formal-
ly linked to a specific APPE course or grade
due in an attempt to bring attention to areas
for improvement rather than be punitive in
nature.

Evaluation and assessment

Forty-four ASPs were assigned to 33 stu-
dents during the 2014-2015 APPE year. MU
COP assigned 28 ASPs to 19 students; four
students were assigned three ASPs, and one
student was assigned two ASPs. UGA COP
assigned 16 ASPs to 14 students; two stu-
dents were assigned two ASPs. Of the 44
ASPs assigned, 34 were assigned due to per-
formance deficiencies. The three most com-
mon patient care-related outcomes defi-
cencies or reasons ASPs were assigned
included: students’ assessment of drug
therapy, students’ ability to develop, imple-
ment, and monitor drug therapy plans, and
students’ critical thinking and problem solv-
ing skills. Ten ASPs were assigned due to
professionalism issues, the majority of
which was excessive tardiness.

As mentioned above, a total of seven stu-
dents received more than one ASP. Five of
these students received the additional ASP
(s) for repeated performance deficiencies in
the same learning objective(s). The learning
objectives which most commonly resulted
in the assignment of at least one repeat
ASP among the five students were: the abil-
ity to develop, implement, and monitor
drug therapy plans (resulted in 6 additional
ASPs) and students’ critical thinking and
problem solving skills (resulted in 5 addi-
tional ASPs).

Of the 27 students who were assigned at
least one ASP for lack of competence in a
learning objective, 20 (74%) were success-
ful in achieving a preceptor-assigned rating
of “competent” or “exceeds expectations” in all
subsequent APPEs. After receiving an ASP, 26%
of students (n=7) were unable to achieve a consistent preceptor-assigned rating of “competent” or “exceeds expectations” for learning objectives which had already been brought to the student’s attention through an ASP.

Discussion

Of note, the majority of students who completed an ASP improved in the identified learning objective(s) in future experiences. The incorporation of ASPs into the APPE curriculum met the intended goal of the OEE to have students achieve proficiency by calling attention to repeated or global documented deficiencies.

While the authors realize that differences exist in the assessment and expectations of student performance between preceptors and rotation types, it is felt that attention should be given to the repeated documentation and/or overall lack of proficiency in any of these very important final-year competencies. ASPs provided a non-punitive means to formally address both flagrant and subtle performance deficiencies, the latter of which may not be as readily identified by students and the OEE. ASPs offered a framework for students to create a personalized action plan, emphasizing the importance of reflection and the need for self-awareness. These two traits are key components of the continuous professional development process of a pharmacist. The value of formally practicing these skills with the use of an ASP has the potential to improve students’ current and future practice. ASPs also provided additional opportunities for individualized mentoring and advisement from OEE faculty. Future development opportunities include assessing student perceptions of the usefulness of ASPs and incorporating these reflective activities into a course grade or student portfolio.

Summary

In conclusion, ASPs are one method for achieving Outcome 4 of the CAPE Educational Outcomes 20132. ASPs have the potential to increase student self-awareness of performance deficiencies and provide students with the opportunity to actively engage in their own success.


A defining condition of being human is that we have to understand the meaning of our experience.

-Jack Mezirow

Important Dates

**AACP Annual Meeting Research Poster Abstracts** - Due February 17

**APhA Annual Meeting and Exposition**
March 4-7, 2016
Baltimore, MD

**AMCP Managed Care & Specialty Pharmacy Annual Meeting**
April 19-22, 2016
San Francisco, CA

**ACCP Updates in Therapeutics**
April 8-10, 2016
Sheraton Grand Phoenix
Phoenix, AZ

**ACCP Annual Meeting**
July 23-27, 2016
Anaheim Marriott & Anaheim Convention Center
Anaheim, CA
“The Importance of Student Self-Reflection during Pharmacy Practice Experiences in Shaping Future ‘Habits of Mind’”

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Trish Devine, PharmD; Butler University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences

BACKGROUND

The most valuable lessons often do not come from our experiences, but rather our reflection on those experiences. The importance of self-assessment in the academic setting is well documented in the literature and is included in the 2016 Accreditation Standards and 2013 CAPE outcomes. Domain 4 of the 2013 CAPE Outcomes focuses on personal and professional development, including a student’s ability to “examine and reflect on personal knowledge, skills, abilities, beliefs, biases, motivation and emotions that could enhance or limit personal and professional growth.” In addition to assessing self-reflection through rotation evaluations, professional students at Butler University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (BUCOPHS) are required to complete and share their pre- and post-rotation reflections via their e-portfolio. The purpose of this article is to describe how goal setting and rotation reflections can help pharmacy programs meet the learning objectives associated with Domain 4.1 (self-awareness).

METHODS

At Butler University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (BUCOPHS), first year professional students are assigned to complete 80 hours of community introductory pharmacy practice experience (IPPE). In 2013, a reflection assessment was added as a part of their overall grade for their community experience. Students complete reflections through journal entries in Moodle, an online learning platform, throughout their rotation experience at their community site. In 2013, students completed 4 reflections, after 8, 16, 32, and 72 hours of their rotation experience. In 2014, this was shortened to 3 reflections after 8, 40, and 80 hours of their rotation experience. The students reflect after 8 hours to capture their feelings in a new situation. This also serves as an opportunity for the Experiential Education Director to check to make sure students begin their rotations as assigned. Evaluators noted that there was not a lot of difference in reflections from 8 to 16 hours, since this was only second day on the rotation and students were still adapting to the community environment. Therefore, the 16-hour reflection was eliminated in 2015. Based on student feedback received from the course survey, the timing of the second and third reflections was adjusted to 40 and 80 hours in 2015. This decision allowed the student to reevaluate the personal and professional goals they set at the beginning of the rotation at the halfway point and upon completion of the rotation and provide an opportunity to reflect on their overall experience.

The purpose of these reflections is to develop and enhance the student’s communication skills, lifelong learning skills, and professional attitudes. These journal entries contain the student’s thoughts and feelings about different situations that occur in the community practice setting. Each entry is required to be a minimum of 100 words and contain answers to some of the following:

a. How did you first day meet or not meet your expectations?
b. How have you applied something you learned in school to the community practice setting?
Bodenberg cont’d

c. How have you used open-ended questions, active listening skills, and teach-back counseling methods? What were the results of using these skills?
d. Describe and reflect on an interaction you had with a customer or co-worker at the site.
e. What have you learned at this site?
f. What difficulties did you encounter and how did you resolve them?
g. Describe something you have learned about yourself by completing this assignment.
h. How has this experience influenced your career plans?
i. How did you make a difference in someone’s life?

In addition to the journal entries that are part of the community IPPE, students also complete a pre- and post-experience reflection as part of their e-portfolio following their community IPPE, Institutional IPPE, and each Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE). The pre-reflection question is completed prior to the rotation experience and focuses on what the student hopes to learn during the experience. Students are asked to send preceptors a copy of their e-portfolio link so they can review the student’s goals prior to or on the first day of the rotation. The post-reflection questions include what the student has learned from the experience and how it has impacted his or her personal and professional goals. APPE reflections are evaluated on a quarterly basis and feedback is given to students about the quality of their reflection and whether changes need to be made.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

The Directors of Experiential Education review and discuss the grading criteria for the journal entries annually in order to ensure consistency when grading student journal entries and providing feedback. Each entry is worth a total of 10 points, with a 3-point scale (0-2) for the following categories: timeliness of submitting, grammar and spelling, adherence to word count and guidelines, clarity, and inclusion of thoughts and feelings regarding the experience. The mean scores for 2014 were 9.78, 9.89, 9.91, and 9.93 for the 8, 32, 48, and 72-hour reflections respectively. The mean scores for 2015 were 9.57, 9.83, and 9.64 for the 8, 40, and 80-hour reflections respectively.

As a sample, student 80-hour reflections for community IPPEs from fall 2015 were reviewed. Seventy-two of the 125 reflections (58%) discussed how their institutional experience had influenced their career path. Sixty-five percent of students felt that their experience reinforced their career decision, 29% of students felt that their experience had caused them to change their opinion about community pharmacy and now consider it as a career option, and 6% of students felt that the rotation had further solidified their decision to become a pharmacist. Several student reflections commented on specific skills that they learned from their preceptor and stated that they would carry these forward into their future practice. Other students commented on how much they had learned about themselves in the process. As one student reflected, “After completing my 80 hours of community IPPE hours, I feel even more confident about my education path. I am so happy with the career that I have chosen to pursue! I think that a pharmacist is the perfect fit for my personality and values. I was already thinking of becoming a community pharmacist, and after this experience in a different type of
community pharmacy, I am even more confident in that decision.” Another student commented, “This rotation has taught me a lot about myself. Most importantly that I enjoy patient interaction and when I help a patient even with the smallest thing…I feel as though I am making a difference in that person’s life.”

DISCUSSION

Preceptor feedback indicates that student reflections have been well received. Preceptors feel that reviewing student goals on the first day or prior to the rotation helps them to better customize the individual’s experience and meet defined goals. While there is an increased workload on the Experiential Education Office to grade reflections and provide feedback, the work is balanced by the rotation schedule and spread over the summer for community IPPE students. Decreasing the number of reflections for the community IPPE (from 4 to 3) has also helped to reduce workload.

CONCLUSION

Student reflections about learning and progression towards personal and professional goals before, during and after their IPPE and APPE reflections may help colleges to meet learning objectives related to Domain 4.1 in the CAPE Outcomes.

REFERENCES


Resources

Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind by Arthur L. Costa and Bena Kallick.

APhA-ASP/AACP Version 2.0 Pharmacy Professionalism Toolkit for Students and Faculty (http://www.aacp.org/resources/studentaffairspersonnel/studentaffairspolicies/Documents/Version_2%200_Pharmacy_Professionalism_Toolkit_for_Students_and_Faculty.pdf)

ASHP Leadership Resource Center (www.ashpfoundation.org/MainMenuCategories/CenterforPharmacyLeadership/)

AACP Leadership Development Webinar Series, Leadership Toolkit, Leadership Development Associations and Journals (www.aacp.org/governance/SIGS/leadershipdevelopment/Pages/default.aspx)


“Thinking is an engagement of the mind that changes the mind.”

—Martin Heidegger, What Do We Mean

“By reflecting on what we do, by giving it coherence, and by sharing and articulating our craft knowledge, we make meaning, we learn” —Roland Barth
Wisdom can be defined as ‘the soundness of an action or decision with regard to the application of experience, knowledge, and good judgment’. Experience without reflection, ‘serious thought or consideration’, does not make an individual wise. It takes a combination of experience and reflection to grow and become better at what it is we are trying to achieve.

*By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; second by imitation which is easiest; and third, by experience, which is the bitterest.*

—Confucius

As schools/colleges of pharmacy, we strive to provide a quality education to our students which include providing challenging, diverse, innovative, and exceptional experiential learning opportunities. However, these learning opportunities and experiences will not in and of themselves enable a student to achieve the personal and professional growth and ultimate ‘wisdom’ we as educators hope for our students. After all, it takes experience plus reflection to grow a wise professional practitioner that our patients deserve.

The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education and the Centers for the Advancement of Pharmaceutical Education (CAPE) outcomes stress the importance of personal and professional growth through self awareness, leadership, innovation and entrepreneurship, and professionalism. However, they do not dictate how this must be done. This allows schools/colleges to develop their own ways to incorporate reflective practices into the Experiential Education program to ensure professional growth. In this edition of the newsletter, two articles provide insight into this important outcome of pharmacy education.

The article by *Bodenberg and Devine* describes how Butler University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences utilizes student self reflection during Introductory and Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences. These reflective practices help students to become more self-aware and contribute to self growth.

The article by *Welch and Bonner* at University of Georgia College of Pharmacy and Mercer University College of Pharmacy, respectively, addresses the use of academic success plans during Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences in order to promote self awareness. During this formal reflective process, students can reflect on experiential performance and develop plans for performance improvement and professional growth.

These articles provide some insight into one area of Domain 4 of the CAPE outcomes, Personal and Professional development. However, it is important to recognize that there are multiple ways to demonstrate Domain 4 outcomes and like Nike says ‘*Just do it*’. Be sure to check out the Ex Ed Status Update on page 4 of the newsletter to find out how four other schools/colleges of pharmacy are incorporating reflective practices into IPPE and APPE.

### Special thanks to the AACP Experiential Education Section Newsletter Committee:

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