Assessment of attendance encouragement on attendance and classroom performance in a drug information course

Christopher S. Wisniewski, PharmD, MSCR, BCPS
Department of Clinical Pharmacy and Outcomes Sciences, South Carolina College of Pharmacy
Charleston, SC

Background

- Policy of distance education (DE) school that all lectures be recorded and made available to students following lecture
- Perspectives
  - Students want recordings for studying purposes
  - Faculty feel this policy depresses attendance
- Methods for encouraging attendance include pop quizzes, required attendance, and extra credit
- Theories
  - Attendance impacts grades directly
  - Attendance negatively impacts grades because requiring attendance of disinterested students distracts engaged students

Purpose

- To determine if encouraging attendance by using passwords for assignment access influenced attendance and performance

Methods

- Course
  - 2-credit hour drug information class taught via DE in Fall semester of third year of traditional 4-year pharmacy school curriculum
  - Taught in distance education environment via synchronous connections with captured recordings available for subsequent student review
  - Objectives include:
    - Develop drug information skills to perform responsibilities of advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE) rotations and as a licensed pharmacist
    - Develop proficiency in critical literature evaluation
    - Cultivate teamwork and presentation skills
- Assignments
  - 5-10 multiple choice question exercises assigned at end of class and cares when I
- Instructor knows
  - Interested in course
  - Instructor provides material beyond that
- In readily available
- Instructor highlights
- Material beyond that
- Easy course content
- Attendance not taken as less of a reason to not attend
- Students in 2017 versus 2016 were less concerned with content difficulty and more interested in instructor rapport
- Students in 2017 versus 2016 chose attendance not being taken as less of a reason to not attend

Results

Table 1. Baseline Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>2016 (n = 181)</th>
<th>2017 (n = 174)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (n, %)</td>
<td>127 (70.17)</td>
<td>126 (72.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single (n, %)</td>
<td>148 (82.22)</td>
<td>155 (89.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed (n, %)</td>
<td>120 (66.30)</td>
<td>151 (86.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (mean)</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment average (%)</td>
<td>39.16</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Outcomes Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>2016 (n = 184)</th>
<th>2017 (n = 180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total attendance (n, %)</td>
<td>1679/1840 (91.25)</td>
<td>969/1800 (53.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course average (%)</td>
<td>87.06%</td>
<td>88.28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Student desired grade

Figure 2. Student ranking of reasons to attend

Discussion

- Boosting student attendance in the DE environment can be achieved
- Limitations
  - Student attendance tracking was missed once per each class year
- Course and faculty evaluation scores improved from 2016 to 2017

Conclusions

- Password-protected assignments increased student attendance but did not impact course grade average
- Students ranked reasons to attend and not attend class slightly differently between years
- Students in 2016 versus 2017 were less concerned with content difficulty and more interested in instructor rapport
- Students in 2017 versus 2016 chose attendance not being taken as less of a reason to not attend class
- Password-protected assignments may be used to increase student attendance, but attendance does not appear to impact student performance; therefore, justification for student attendance should be given careful consideration