Collaborative Use of a Mock Trial as a Learning and Assessment Activity in Two Pharmacy Programs

Ettie Rosenberg, PharmD, JD1; Hoai-An Truong, PharmD, MPH, FAPhA, FNAP1,2; Shih-Ying (Audrey) Hsu, PhD, RPh1; Reza Taheeri, PharmD, MBA1

1. West Coast University School of Pharmacy 2 University of Maryland Eastern Shore School of Pharmacy

BACKGROUND
- Outside of law programs, few reports appear in the literature on the utility of mock trials as a teaching-learning tool.1,8
- The described mock trial project is a previously tested model for teaching-learning and assessment of student debate on controversial issues in health care.10,18
- The deliberate design of this specific activity reinforces cognitive skills, while affording opportunities for developing and measuring affective domain competencies.1,9
- The mock trial project was originally developed at West Coast University School of Pharmacy (WCU) in 2015 and repeated in 2016.10,20
- The mock trial project exposes students to self-directed learning and research, opportunities to apply evidence-based decision making, and immerses students in civic processes, argument and advocacy, courtroom decorum.
- Essential elements of the mock trial project include students’ self-awareness, leadership, and collaboration within a group learning environment.10,16
- In 2017, an educational research collaboration between WCU and University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) School of Pharmacy and Health Professions allowed its implementation in both institutions in two parallel tracks, data from which is reported here.

OBJECTIVE
- To evaluate implementation of a mock-trial used as a learning and assessment activity in a first-professional year (P1) required course at two pharmacy programs (WCU & UMES).

METHODS (continued)
- A panel of 6 faculty-judges assessed students’ trial performance in each trial based on eight criteria (Figure 1).
- Descriptive analyses were conducted for faculty-judge scores, student-jury scores, student-peer evaluations for each of two mock trials at both institutions.
- Students from one program also completed a survey evaluating the overall mock trial experience.
- An Institutional Review Board approval was obtained.

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

METHODS
- After two iterations in a P1 course at one institution (WCU: 2015, 2016), a semester-long mock-trial project was expanded to incorporate another institution (WCU and UMES: 2017)10.
- Faculty from both institutions collaborated on topic selection, standardization of procedures, and assessment tools.
- Each cohort of students (at WCU and UMES) was divided into teams that researched, prepared, and debated the evidence-based merits “for” and “against” two distinct controversial topics in courtroom format in each of two trials.

Primary Care Shortage Trial:
- Petitioner: Pharmacists are best equipped to address the primary care shortage.
- Respondent: Other health professionals are best equipped to address the primary care shortages.

Manufacturer Discount Coupon Trial:
- Petitioner: Manufacturer discount coupon programs should be eliminated.
- Respondent: Manufacturer discount coupon programs should be maintained.

RESULTS

Table 1. Summary of Scores from Four Mock Trials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trial</th>
<th>Judge Average</th>
<th>Jurors Average</th>
<th>Difference between Judges and Jurors Average Scores</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>p [D]</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Care Shortage Trial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institution 1 (n=28)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27.46 (0.47)</td>
<td>27.45</td>
<td>27.00</td>
<td>28.75</td>
<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institution 2 (n=30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27.71 (0.50)</td>
<td>27.50</td>
<td>27.00</td>
<td>28.00</td>
<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturer Discount Coupon Trial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institution 1 (n=28)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27.70 (0.00)</td>
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<td>27.70</td>
<td>27.70</td>
<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institution 2 (n=30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27.83 (0.07)</td>
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<td>27.83</td>
<td>27.83</td>
<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
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Table 2. Student Evaluation of Peer Engagement in Mock Trial Project

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trial</th>
<th>Judge Average</th>
<th>Jurors Average</th>
<th>Difference between Judges and Jurors Average Scores</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
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<th>Minimum</th>
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<tr>
<td>Institution 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28.64 (1.27)</td>
<td>28.75</td>
<td>27.50</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29.00 (0.00)</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturer Discount Coupon Trial</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>28.75 (0.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institution 2</td>
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<td>29.00 (0.00)</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
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DISCUSSION
- Results suggest that the mock trial project previously implemented in an Evidence-Based Practice course at Institution 1 was successfully replicated in a Public Health for Pharmacists course at Institution 2.
- Results reveal the difference between judges’ and jurors’ average scores was statistically significant in 3 out of the 4 mock trials (Table 1).
- Both faculty-judges and student-jurors scores in the mock trials at Institution 1 were similar to those at Institution 2. Overall, students at both institutions met expected competencies. (Table 1).
- Student evaluations of peer engagement were also similar among the four different mock trials across two institutions. (Table 2)
- The overall mock trial experience was perceived positively by students at Institution 1. Interestingly, students who participated in the Manufacturer Discount Coupon Trial evaluated the mock trial experience more favorably than those participated in the Primary Care Shortage Trial. (Table 3)

CONCLUSION
- This study provides preliminary evidence to support that the mock trial as a learning and assessment strategy can be generalized to other programs and courses.

REFERENCES
5. Evidence-Based Medicine: The online journal of the Evidence-Based Medicine Program. 2010; 24(2): 10-15.