A Pilot Activity of Providing an Academic APPE Elective Conducted Via Videoconferencing

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Background

- Schools of pharmacy have an opportunity to educate students regarding faculty roles and responsibilities and encourage students to pursue careers in academia.
- Our pharmacy practice department includes 38 full-time faculty located throughout the state and in two locations in surrounding states.
- Student pharmacists are assigned to one of five geographic regions for their fourth professional year of advanced pharmacy practice experiences (APPEs).
- A videoconferenced, academic APPE elective was designed in 2015 when a full-time faculty preceptor relocated to an area outside of the school's established regions.

Objectives

- To describe an APPE provided via videoconference between an off-campus faculty member and students and assess students' experiences and learning outcomes of the APPE.
- To describe the faculty preceptor and experiential administration's perspectives of this APPE.

Methods

- A 5-week APPE was developed using backwards design and delivered via videoconferencing with the preceptor and students physically located in different experiential regions.
- All 150 third-year students were offered the opportunity to select this APPE elective for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 academic P4 years. For the 2017-2018 academic year, students had to specifically request to experiential administration for this APPE.
- Students participated in teaching, scholarship/research and service activities.
- Students attended approximately three class sessions (1-3 hours per class) each week and one or two skills labs (8-16 hours) in each APPE.
- Each week, students had approximately 5 hours of assigned pre-readings and activities to complete prior to topic discussions.
- The students and faculty preceptor met for approximately 1.5 hours on average four times weekly via videoconference to discuss the weekly topic.
- On average, the student spent five days a week on videoconference with the faculty preceptor in the various APPE activities.
- Polycom RealPresence Desktop®, Polycom, Inc., Skype® for Business (Microsoft®) or Zoom, Zoom Video Communications®, Inc. were software used for videoconferencing.
- After the APPE, students completed an electronic survey in Qualtrics® comparing their perspectives and learning outcomes pre- and post-APPE and provided qualitative feedback in addition to the standard APPE feedback evaluation through PharmAcademic™.
- The preceptor’s and experiential administration’s perspectives were documented.
- The university institutional review board approved this project.

Results

- Six students completed this APPE over three academic years.
- The faculty preceptor was located at a distant site, 4 hours from campus. Four students were located on campus and two students were located in a region approximately 2 hours from the faculty preceptor.
- Students reported selecting the APPE because they wanted to learn about academia (100%), considered it an important rotation for a future career as a full-time faculty member (33%) or affiliate faculty member/preceptor (83%), sought teaching opportunities (83%), or because it offered a flexible rotation (33%).
- All students stated there was ‘no hindrance’ with this rotation being conducted via videoconference or with the geographical distance between preceptor and students.
- All students stated the APPE helped prepare them for residency application/interview process and working with schools of pharmacy in the future.
- After the APPE, five students (83%) stated their interest in a full-time academic career increased; one student’s interest remained the same.
- All students stated they would recommend this APPE to other students.

Faculty Preceptor Reflection and Experiential Education Feedback

- The faculty preceptor’s reflections and experiential administration’s feedback of the APPE were positive.
- The faculty member was very pleased with the design and outcomes of the rotation.
- Students were engaged throughout the APPE and seemed to enjoy the activities.
- Distance teaching worked very well and minimal technological issues occurred.

Conclusions

- Students, the preceptor, and experiential administration deemed this videoconferenced academic APPE effective and successful.
- This experience affords students, without regard for physical location, the opportunity to pursue personal interests in academia, adds to the variety of APPEs and allows students to learn about academic pharmacy careers, which is an ongoing area of need in pre- and post-APPE.
- Challenges include occasional technology connectivity issues and limited in-person interactions.
- Changes to the structure for future offerings were based upon the faculty’s observations and the student survey responses.