

American College of Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine

Enhancing Communication & Assessment to Improve Student Success

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Executive Summary

Since the founding of the college in 1991, the goal was to train students to become successful practitioners. To be a successful practitioner, students have been required to demonstrate adequate academic and clinic skills before graduation. Much of student success is evaluated in the clinic during clinical training, which is during the last year of the students' education. Students are evaluated based on clinic performance, professionalism, academic achievement in internship exams, and a comprehensive exit examination. However, success academically did not always translate to success clinically. Interns who performed well on point location exams and didactic coursework did not always end up with the most patients during clinical internship. Consequently, much of the individual's success are due to non-academic related issues. Through clinic observation, faculty members noticed that students with high communication abilities and charm had a tendency to attract and retain more patients, while interns who did not have great communication abilities had a more difficult time retaining patients.

Based on the most recent academic assessment of student learning, the leadership realized that many of the student learning outcomes were measured. Overall, students performed well academically and faculty has been scored adequately via dean evaluations and student evaluations. Students with the highest GPA were not necessarily interns with the highest patient loads. Clinic interns, as shown in the academic assessment, are measured via various core competencies, including core competency of "Patient Care" and "Professionalism, Ethics, and Clinic Management". These competencies would be strengthened if there were more focus on training and measurements such as communication and assessment evaluations. By incorporating outcomes that measured communications and ways to utilize Western medical assessments, it is theorized that patients would be more impressed with their interns and more likely to trust the interns for their care. Consequently, as part of the Quality Enhancement Plan, the college is implementing strategies in patient communication and Western medical assessment improvements to improve patient results and student learning and success. Being able to communicate thoroughly with patients is key to patient confidence, compliance, and understanding. In addition, communicating well will help students learn by ensuring that students understand the patient condition. The QEP will also train students to learn Western medical assessments in the clinic to apply and track patient progress. With better tracking of patient progress and diagnostic tools, students will better help patients and increase their success rate.