

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Texas A&M Health Science Center (TAMHSC) has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), Critically Appraise Relevant Evidence (CARE), that has at its foundation three primary goals; 1) to develop students' skill in critical thinking, 2) to develop students' skill in evidence-based decision making, and 3) develop the faculties' capacity and resources to teach critical thinking and evidence-based decision making.

CARE: Critically Appraise Relevant Evidence originated as one of 20 Quality Enhancement Plan topics submitted in spring 2010 by members of the Texas A&M Health Science Center community. Through a vetting process that included a vote by faculty, staff, and students, *CARE* was selected as the winning proposal. *CARE* proposes to enhance the processes through which we teach and practice our belief that all people “*deserve the benefits of compassionate care, superior science and exceptional health education.*”

By establishing a firm foundation of effective critical thinking skills, *CARE* will introduce and enhance the application of evidence-based decision making by students, as well as the teaching of these skills by faculty and preceptors. Success of this project will be ensured by first building the infrastructure needed to support this institution-wide project. The first year of *CARE* will be devoted to building institutional capacity to fully implement the project through the creation, testing, and modification of online instructional modules to support instruction and the provision of extensive faculty development. Faculty members and preceptors will receive online and workshop-based instruction in critical thinking skills and evidence-based decision making as well as how to best teach, apply, and assess these concepts and skills in classroom, clinical, and practical settings.

Beginning in the second project year, students in each of the six academic units (Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Graduate Studies, Rural Public Health) will be instructed in the basics of critical thinking skills and evidence-based decision making through the online instructional modules embedded in their courses. Students will demonstrate their ability to use critical thinking skills to: design research that may lead to insight into disease processes and novel interventions; appraise evidence resulting in competent diagnostic assessments; and use appropriate preventive or corrective interventions.

Formative assessment of student learning will be conducted through the online modules, course-embedded assignments, and programmatic benchmarks specific to each academic unit. Summative assessment of student learning will include such tools as licensure, comprehensive exams and a comparison of standardized tests of critical thinking and evidence-based decision making self-efficacy/knowledge. Programmatic assessment will include continuous monitoring of project implementation at the component levels by faculty committees and the institutional level by the *CARE* Planning and Implementation Committee as well as the institution-wide Assessment Committee. Assessment Data will be recorded in a centralized repository (TracDat) for Health Science Center strategic planning and assessment information, making these data and reports readily accessible for review, compilation, and analysis to assess achievement of project goals.

The far-reaching effects of *CARE* will advance the mission of the Texas A&M Health Science Center through which “*we dedicate the full measure of our resources and abilities to advancing the knowledge and technologies of our professions, and to bringing Texans the finest in health education, promotion and care. Because of our work, people’s lives are changed — across our state, around the nation, and throughout the world.*”

With institutional commitment and broad-based support from the Texas A&M Health Science Center’s community, *CARE* is positioned to improve students’ critical thinking and evidence-based practice skills. For more information, please contact TAMHSC’s QEP Director, Dr. Kelleen Stine-Cheyne by e-mail (stinecheyne@tamhsc.edu) or phone (979-436-0283).