

An Assessment of a Cultural Competency Curriculum Using Reflection Papers

Ann McDonough Madden MHS, PA-C

Julie Kinzel M. Ed., PA-C

Patrick Auth PhD, PA-C



DREXEL UNIVERSITY

College of

Nursing and Health Professions

Purpose

- Our purpose is to assess physician assistant students' knowledge of cross-cultural barriers to accessing health care using reflection papers at the culmination of their education.

Rationale

- Our research is mission focused. The mission of our program is threefold:
 - Educate primary care physician assistants.
 - Improve health care delivery in rural and urban medically underserved areas.
 - Promote the physician assistant profession.
- With an increasingly diverse patient population in 21st century America, it is imperative to include cultural competency in the training of a physician assistant student. At Drexel University Physician Assistant Program, we are committed to closing the disparities gap in health care and recognize the unique role that PA educators play in this issue.

Rationale

- **Healthy People 2020** objectives call for improved access to comprehensive, quality health care services for all patients.
- **Betancourt, J. B. (2006).** Eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in health care: What is the role of academic medicine?
 - curricula in the impact of race, ethnicity, and culture on clinical decision making as well as cultural competence.
 - “must be a critical part of the mission of academic medicine”
 - cannot be an “afterthought or add-on”
- **Symington, S., Cooper, K. and Wallace, L. (2006).** A Description of Cultural Competency Education in Physician Assistant Programs.
 - identifies the educational methods used in teaching cultural competency.
 - suggestions provided for faculty development, community service activities, and ways to incorporate cultural competency into a curriculum
- **ARC-PA 4th ed. Standards (2011).**
 - B1.06: The curriculum *must* include instruction to prepare students to provide medical care to patients from diverse populations.
- **Core Cultural Competencies for Physician Assistant Students:**
 - Knowledge, Professional Attitude and Skills.

Cultural Competency Curriculum Thread

- A cultural competency thread is included in the 27 month curriculum.
- Curricular threads are topics deemed to be important and vital to the graduate PA student. Topics are integrated with other components throughout the curriculum.
- The cultural competency curricular threads help to strengthen student learning by providing opportunities to reinforce learning by revisiting material and applying it in different ways throughout their physician assistant school education.

Student Society Diversity Chair

- Shall be the liaison between the student society, the PSPA, and the SAAPA Director of Student Diversity.
- Identify and help address issues of race, ethnic and cultural diversity, and diversity in healthcare
- Coordinate with the regional chair to bring back information regarding local activities and educational efforts regarding student diversity.
- Keep abreast of Drexel University Intercultural Engagement and Diversity Initiative and report to fellow classmates on updates

Fall Quarter

- BAFA BAFA Orientation– a diversity, cross-cultural simulation exercise
- Patient Communication Course Lecture topics:
 - Health literacy
 - Patient education
 - Translators, cultural competency
 - Geriatrics, disabled patients; Doc.com Module on Understanding Differences and Diversity
- Physician Assistant Practice Course
 - Lecture “Cultural Competency and Respecting Differences”
 - Stewardship panel, Servant Leadership theory
 - Health Education Presentations in the community
- Ethical Issues in Physician Assistant Practice Course
 - Tuskegee Experiment Video
 - Lecture “Culture and Medicine”
 - Cultural Videos involved in teaching informed consent, use of a translator
World’s Apart

Winter Quarter

- Evidence Based Medicine Course
 - Concepts in Health Promotion/Disease Prevention
 - Healthy People 2020
 - Clinical Skills Seminar – patient case scenarios developed by students are encouraged to have cultural diversity components.
 - Discussion during patient education role play may center on the cultural influences of behavior change

Spring Quarter

- Biopsychosocial Issues in Patient Care
 - Stigma of Mental Illness
 - Complementary and Alternative Medicine
 - Human Sexuality LGBTQI issues
 - Simulation with SP HIV case

Summer Quarter

- **Modules of Geriatrics populations**
 - Students have an opportunity to meet with a geriatric resident in their home/apartment and debriefing after the encounter may include cultural influences observed.
- **Health Policy course lectures:**
 - Health Inequities
 - Social Determinants of Health

Clinical Year

- Emergency Medicine, Behavioral Medicine and Medicine Grand Rounds
 - Students are required to identify a cross-cultural issues affecting diagnosis and/or treatment in their case presentations.

Clinical Year

- Primary Care Practicum II
- Students are required to complete a cross-cultural reflection paper
- The Cross-Cultural Reflection Paper requires students to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities regarding cross-cultural issues. Specific patient encounters or summarizing the observed cultural experiences encountered by a group of patients are examples.

Research Questions

- Are senior physician assistant students at Drexel University Physician Assistant Program able to identify cultural issues that are a barrier for patients in accessing healthcare?
- What are the cultural barriers identified by the physician assistant students experienced by patients in accessing healthcare?

Methodology

- The research design was mixed methodology.
- Participants in this study included 77 students from the PA Class of 2012.
- Students were required to identify and discuss various cross cultural beliefs and practices that influence health behavior among members of a cultural group, as well as health care access within that cultural community.

Methodology

- Students were required to write a reflection paper of specific cross-cultural issues observed and how might these beliefs and practices affect decisions by members of the group to utilize or forego particular health care methods

Methodology

- The method to evaluate the qualitative data from the reflection papers involved a series of codes relating to the emergent themes.
- The reflection papers were read by the researchers.
- Each student may have reflected on more than one theme. Frequency statistics were used to summarize the data.

Results

- Ninety-six percent of the physician assistant students were able identify a cross-culture barrier to accessing health care.

Results

The results from this study identified the following themes as cross-cultural barriers:

34%	Ethnicity or culture
20%	English as a second language or limited English proficiency (ESL/LEP)
19%	Socioeconomic issues
12%	Religion
11%	Fear of medical care
9%	Disease stigma
4%	Health care provider bias
2%	Neighborhood violence and the following were mentioned by at least one student, gender, sexual orientation, age, overwhelmed caretaker, and deafness

Students' Reflections

“I gained a new appreciation for the problems {low socioeconomic and violence} facing patients that I see in practice.”

“I was amazed to learn that many patients felt stigmatized and judged by their healthcare provider.”

“Regardless of the specific barrier faced, many of the patients stated my willingness to spend time with them to try and understand their perspective was the biggest step that helped improve and foster a better and more beneficial relationship.”

Students' Reflections

“As medical providers, it is important to keep in mind the cross-cultural issues that our patients face. This will allow us to provide the best quality of care.”

“ It is important to remember that, regardless of one's background, when a healthcare provider walks into a patient's room, there still exists, to some, an elitist perception of the white-coat provider. It is our responsibility to dispel this perception.”

Students' Reflections

“After graduation I would like to organize a community health workshop at my church to promote early detection and treatment (colorectal cancer) to the Vietnamese community. “

“In closing the availability of healthcare in my areas is difficult for all and I see the need for mid-level providers increasing. After graduation, I would ask my supervising physician if we could consider blocking time to offer care to the underserved or having Saturday office hours once a month for the underserved.”

Conclusion

- At Drexel University Physician Assistant Program, we are committed to closing the disparities gap in health care and recognize the unique role that PA educators play in this issue.
- This research supports our intention to educate students to become well rounded PA's that deliver high quality care regardless of patient's race, ethnicity, first language, religion, socioeconomic status or sexual orientation.

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