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The influence of longitudinal integrated clerkships on clinical scholarship in regional and rural communities of practice

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The influence of longitudinal integrated clerkships on clinical scholarship in regional and rural communities of practice

Abstract

All senior medical students at the University of Wollongong undertake a longitudinal integrated community-based clerkship, supervised by experienced generalist practitioners (GPs) in a regional or rural community. Prior to the first clerkship, GP preceptors predicted outcomes from their relationship with the long-term students, including a more scholarly approach to clinical practice. This prompted exploration of preceptor post-clerkship perceptions in the light of Grigsby and Tl10rnykes (2011) recent working definition of clinical scholarship in academic medicine.

Keywords

integrated, clerkships, clinical, influence, scholarship, longitudinal, regional, rural, communities, practice

Disciplines

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Title: The Influence of Longitudinal Integrated Clerkships on Clinical Scholarship in Regional and Rural Communities of Practice

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Background

All senior medical students at the University of Wollongong undertake a longitudinal integrated community-based clerkship, supervised by experienced generalist practitioners (GPs) in a regional or rural community. Prior to the first clerkship, GP preceptors predicted outcomes from their relationship with the long-term students, including a more scholarly approach to clinical practice. This prompted exploration of preceptor post-clerkship perceptions in the light of Grigsby and Thorndykes (2011) recent working definition of clinical scholarship in academic medicine¹.

Purpose

This research sought evidence to support a modern definition of clinic scholarship in general practice.

Questions for exploration

What are GP perceptions of a longitudinal medical student clerkship in terms of clinical scholarship in the general practice and community setting?

Results

Theme-analysis of 26 GP transcripts provided evidence for clinical scholarship in regional/rural clinical medicine. The 'practice', validated as a place where scholarship occurs, was described as an environment of shared knowledge, collaborative partnerships and broad learning. About half of the preceptors interviewed believed the longitudinal integrated clerkship gave students a deeper link with the community. Two-thirds of participants described an improved quality of care in their practice.

Discussion

Our results provide direct support for Grigsby and Thorndykes (2011) working definition of clinical scholarship, particularly the description of clinical scholarship occurring in the 'throes of practice, extending to a deeper involvement in the community, being interdisciplinary, with knowledge and expertise valued by the university, enhancing clinical care and improving the health of the community.

Conclusion

The longitudinal-integrated-clerkship model promoted clinical scholarship amongst regional/rural general practitioners and their communities of practice, involved in the long-term supervision of medical students. 1Acad Med (2011) 86(1):127-131