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Assessing Mentor and Coordinator Professional Development in the Context of Medical School Learning Communities

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Abstract

Background

Learning communities (LCs) create a bridge for senior students to engage with peers to provide advice and support. Anecdotally, LC leaders gain confidence in communication, empathy, and leadership - well received traits for residency. We aim to describe and quantify the growth of LC leaders over time.

Methods

This study aims to elucidate an objective measure of student leader growth and development. We will evaluate opinions on the LC's ability to foster professional and personal growth, and we will assess areas for improvement. Through Qualtrics self-rated queries using a Likert scale, we will survey 32 Coordinators from classes 2023-2026 and 24 M2 student mentors at various time-points in the year.

Results

From the first two iterations of this research in 2022 and 2023, we found that most peer mentors acknowledged growth in leadership, empathy, and communication. Mentors prioritized building mentees' confidence and mentee goal achievement but individually lacked confidence in facilitating these outcomes, possibly due to a lack of perceived support. We also assessed areas of improvement in the program, such as the perceived benefit of an educational intervention. Students responded that an optional curriculum would be most beneficial to allow them to develop skills they felt weak in.

Conclusion

This research presents a quality-assessment tool that will be repeated year-over-year to build longitudinal findings. We plan to incorporate optional educational interventions next year based on feedback from this year. These findings help us internally improve our LC program and validate the benefits of near-peer mentorship in medical education.