



The Role of Program Evaluation in Medical Education at the John A. Burns School of Medicine

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Introduction

“Program evaluation is an indispensable tool in education decision making. It is a process for monitoring and improving institutional programs and for enhancing an institution’s efficiency and effectiveness in achieving its own goals and objectives...”¹

Program evaluation is an integral part of the practice of any medical school. The Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), the accreditation body for all medical schools in the United States, gives specific recognition to the role of program evaluation in its accreditation standards.

“There must be integrated institutional responsibility for the overall design, management, and evaluation of a coherent and coordinated curriculum... To guide program improvement, medical schools must evaluate the effectiveness of the educational program by documenting the extent to which its objectives have been met... In assessing program quality, schools must consider student evaluations of their courses and teachers, and an appropriate variety of outcome measures.”²

Educational experiences for students require that medical schools accept the responsibility for developing and implementing a coordinated and cyclical process of program development, implementation, and evaluation. The chart below shows the close relationship of the these components.

The program evaluation process looks at both implementation and outcomes, seeks feedback from both students and teachers, and considers other markers that reflect program effectiveness.

Three key questions that should be addressed in any program evaluation are³:

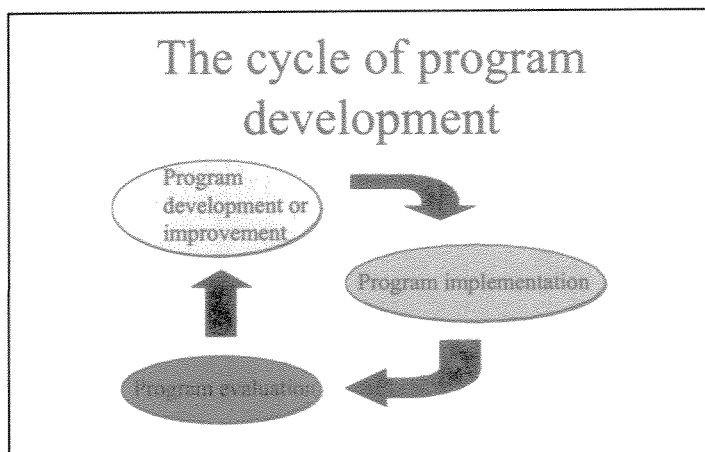
1. Were the intended implemented?
2. What were the expected and unexpected outcomes?
3. What can be generalized from these findings to improve educational practices in the future?

Program evaluation at JABSOM

Program evaluation activities at the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) based in the Office of Medical Education (OME) are overseen by the JABSOM Curriculum Committee. JABSOM’s program evaluation process ensures an ongoing review of the JABSOM curriculum, and focuses efforts for improvement. This continuous review process includes much more than an audit of whether educational outcomes are achieved. Program evaluation efforts and practices are guided by national professional standards for evaluators.

In 2001, JABSOM implemented the first phases of a new, comprehensive program evaluation system. The system was designed to address student achievement of the JABSOM Objectives for Graduation,⁴ national accreditation standards specifically relevant to education,³ and educational research possibilities. A central component of the program evaluation system is a series of 14 surveys administered to students at various points throughout their four-year medical school experience. Additional surveys are administered to medical school alumni at the end of their first post-graduate training (internship) year, and six years after graduation. In addition, a survey is administered to the program directors of the residency programs in which each JABSOM graduate completes internship training.

These survey instruments are one component of the overall program evaluation system. Other quantitative and qualitative data collection tools are being developed to assure proper data triangulation. The medical school has also established policies and practices for the formal peer review of all required medical school courses, monitors regularly the performance of medical students on national licensing examinations, reviews student responses to the nationally-administered Association of American Medical Colleges



(AAMC) Graduation Questionnaire, and reviews annually the competitive residency 'match' process for all graduating students.

The information gathered from these program evaluation components is summarized, directed, and discussed by the relevant course directors, educational administrators, and educational committees. The JABSOM Curriculum Committee is responsible for coordinating and overseeing this process, and providing a summary of their recommendations to the respective course director. Finally, course director responses to these recommendations are reviewed by the Curriculum Committee. Through this process the continuous cycle of curriculum development and implementation and program evaluation is facilitated and ensured.

Plans for continued expansion

Future plans in program evaluation include the development of instruments to collect feedback from stakeholders, possibly including patient groups, community employers of physicians, and peer/colleagues of JABSOM graduates.

Summary

An effective program evaluation process is vital to the management of a medical school curriculum. JABSOM's comprehensive program evaluation system helps to ensure that the school remains a leader in medical education and provides valuable information in its quest to develop outstanding physicians who will serve the people of Hawaii and the Pacific.

References:

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