Evolution of Block Model Scheduling for Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences

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BACKGROUND

APPE Requirements
Fourth year pharmacy students are required to complete 11 months of APPEs at the University of Florida College of Pharmacy which includes the following rotation types:
- Adult Medicine – 2 months
- Ambulatory Care – 2 months
- Hospital Practice – 1 month
- Community Practice – 1 month
- Patient Care Electives – minimum of 3 months
- Non-Patient Care Electives – maximum of 2 months

Block Definition
A block rotation is a consecutive multi-rotation experience at a single institution or site designed with the intention of minimizing student onboarding in order to maximize experiential time for students. Block rotations allow greater immersion of the student into the site, the opportunity to foster deeper relationships with preceptors, patients, and staff, and the ability to increase the student’s breadth of knowledge. Currently, the vast majority of block experiences consist of inpatient/hospital-based rotations.

OBJECTIVES

To describe the evolution of block model scheduling for advanced pharmacy practice experiences.

METHODS

In 2011 the University of Florida College of Pharmacy implemented a block APPE model in which a subset of students completed all required APPEs at a single institution. Based on feedback from focus groups with preceptors and students, the definition of a block was amended to include offerings of at least four (4) months containing at least two (2) months of required APPEs. Additional sites were informed of the block model via direct recruitment by our nine (9) Experiential Regional Coordinators, preceptor development workshops, email, and networking. Descriptive statistics were used to characterize the number of students afforded block opportunities, the number of sites providing blocks, and the percentage of students assigned to sites designated as quality or high-quality.

RESULTS

The number of students scheduled for block APPEs grew from nine (9) (<3%) in 2011-2012 to 185 (64.5%) for the 2014-2015 academic year. For 2015-2016, 257 (92.8%) are scheduled for block rotations, with blocks averaging 4.9 months in duration. The number of practice sites offering block rotations increased from one (1) to forty-two (42), with additional sites now requesting block APPEs. The percentage of students months scheduled at quality or high-quality sites rose from 93.3% to 97.6%.

DISCUSSION

The uptake of the block APPE model indicates preceptors/sites are receptive to block scheduling.

Perceived Benefits of the Block Model
- Reduces onboarding, orientation and training time for students which allows more time for experiential learning
- Increases the student’s breadth of knowledge relating to clinical pharmacy practice in a specific practice setting
- Increases proficiency relating to the medication use system in a specific practice setting
- Enhances the commitment to education by both the preceptors and students
- Improves communication and collaboration between preceptors to provide a more structured and comprehensive learning experience
- Increases the preceptor’s ability to identify students with performance issues and provide remediation opportunities
- Provides opportunity for students to integrate into the pharmacy team and maximize experiential learning

Limitations of the Block Model
- Limited student’s availability for individual rotations not included in a block
- High quality rotations were left unfilled due to a lack of students available during the time frame the rotation was offered
- Decreased number of students scheduled at some sites due to a lack of block opportunities offered
- Limited student’s choices for elective rotations

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Increase the number of outpatient blocks in both the health-system and community settings
- Limit the number of blocks offered in each region to optimize ability to fill high quality rotations regardless of block status
- Use PharmAcademic™ for all aspects of block scheduling including block ranking by students and student ranking by sites
- Assess preceptor and site satisfaction with the block experience
- Assess student satisfaction with the block experience
- Assess the incidence of students with performance issues during block experiences versus non-block experiences
- Assess relationship of block experiences to successful pursuit of residency training
- Assess the number and type of electives offered within each block to maintain the student’s ability to select electives and ensure a more individualized schedule

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