Physician Executive Leadership: Assessing a Student-Led Approach to Healthcare Leadership Education in Medical School

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Physician Executive Leadership: Assessing a Student-Led Approach to Healthcare Leadership Education in Medical School

Jessica V Downing, Anuj Shah, Ronuk M Modi, Jonathan S. Gordon, Lauren E. Grunenwald MS, Jon Veloski MS
Sidney Kimmel Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University

Overview

Background: The physician executive leadership (PEL) curriculum at the Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University is an entirely student-led, extracurricular program that promotes the development of leadership skills among medical students. The program’s mission is to provide a parallel to the traditional curriculum that does not require changing the curriculum itself, allowing students to become well-informed and capable physician leaders.

Aims: The study aimed to assess the impact of the PEL program by surveying participants on their engagement and satisfaction with their participation in the PEL program. The survey was administered to medical students at SKMC at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, PA. All students surveyed completed the PEL program during the 2015-2016 academic year by attending at least six events.

Participants and Setting: The survey consisted of 174 students who completed the start-of-year survey, and 112 completed the end-of-year survey. Our sample consisted of 98 students who completed both surveys: 62 of whom were in their first year of medical school, 32 in their second, and 20 in their third. Among our 215 survey participants, we had a response rate of 87.8%

Methods: The survey included 20 multiple-choice questions assessing student knowledge of healthcare economics, policy, quality and safety, law and medicine, and patient experience. The survey also included an assessment of students’ satisfaction with PEL and their perspectives on PEL’s importance in medical education using a 5-point Likert scale.

Data Analysis: Test scores were analyzed using a paired t-test in SPSS Statistics Version 22. Subjective assessment Likert scale responses (1-5) were subjected to the following statements: Exposure to PEL topics would help me as a physician, PEL topics should be integrated into medical education, Overall satisfaction with PEL.

Results: All medical students will face the complexities of healthcare throughout their careers as clinicians, researchers, educators, and entrepreneurs. Our research demonstrates that students view complex healthcare topics as vital in successfully navigating the current healthcare environment and shaping its future. However, medical education at present does not prioritize these non-clinical learning areas.

Conclusions: All medical students will face the complexities of healthcare throughout their careers as clinicians, researchers, educators, and entrepreneurs. Our research demonstrates that students view complex healthcare topics as vital in successfully navigating the current healthcare environment and shaping its future. However, medical education at present does not prioritize these non-clinical learning areas.

For the Research

The study found that participating in the PEL program had a positive impact on medical students’ academic performance and satisfaction with their medical education. The program’s mission is to prepare students to face five key emerging healthcare topics and become well-informed and capable physician leaders.

For the Program

Based on the results of this study, we are developing a formal curriculum to be implemented in the 2017-18 academic year, centered around small-group sessions with case-based discussions focused on each of the core PEL topics. The curriculum will be facilitated by physician leaders, student, or expert, and will require pre-reading and active participation. Each topic will be divided into two sessions: the first focused on teaching the fundamentals of the topic, and the second on solving related problems facing healthcare today. In addition to the proposed benefits of small-group and case-based learning, these sessions provide an opportunity for students to develop their education in learning styles and interests.

Limitations: The survey was self-reported, and there may be a selection bias. Additionally, the survey was administered at the end of the academic year, which may affect the response rate.

Next Steps

For the 2017-2018 academic year, we plan to change the program requirements. For the past three academic years, students have been able to complete the PEL program each year by earning a set number of credits. Students could earn credits by attending PEL lectures, small-group events, or contributing to our online student journal.

Moving forward, students will be required to: 1) earn one credit in each of PEL’s key five subject areas; and 2) earn enough credits in a single subject area. To fulfill the latter, students will have to attend a lecture, participate in a small-group session, contribute a relevant news article to our weekly newsletter, and pursue an independent inquiry into their chosen subject area. With a summer internship or a piece written for The Diagnostic: An example of how a student could complete these new requirements is outlined below.

Sample Requirements for Completion of the PEL Program, 2017-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Policy</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Finance</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient Experience</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and Medicine</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because this new set of requirements is more extensive than those of previous years, and because students continue to encounter these topics throughout their medical education, the PEL curriculum will become a multi-year engagement that tracks the length of the medical school experience, rather than rehashing at the beginning of each academic year.

We hope that by extending PEL participation through all four years of medical school, and creating a more structured set of completion requirements, we will be able to help students achieve both breadth of knowledge in all PEL topics and depth of knowledge in the topics that interest them most.

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