Community Outreach Project
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ABSTRACT:
A health promotion and disease prevention (HPDP) curriculum should be an integral part of any health profession training program. Since the program started, the Oregon Health & Science University Physician Assistant Program has incorporated a series of lectures and discussions in the didactic curriculum that provide students with an introduction to the promotion of healthy behavior and the reduction of health risk. The culmination is the development of the Community Outreach Project (COP) master’s degree proposal that is carried out as a capstone project during the clinical year.

The overarching goal of the COP is for students to apply their knowledge and skills to a selected topic in the area of health promotion and disease prevention. By identifying and engaging a target audience and developing and implementing an educational presentation on a health topic, the program hopes to instill a commitment to community service and health promotion among our graduates. Ultimately, the goal is that when these students graduate they will continue to incorporate these skills in their clinical practices and promote wellness within their communities.

EDUCATIONAL METHODS OR APPROACHES USED:
This course incorporates a variety of educational methods including classroom lectures, online tutorials, small group discussion groups, peer and faculty evaluation and feedback and, ultimately, service learning.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:
The major impetus for initiating the project was the desire to instill in our PA students the need to be involved in their community by providing educational sessions on various health promotion and disease prevention topics. Many students are intimidated by the thought of doing a community presentation. We wanted to teach them the skills required to develop and implement a community presentation and to provide the opportunity for them to actually carry out their project. Although a number of students initially express discomfort about giving a presentation to a community group, most of them express the desire to continue to do community presentations after they complete their project.

Because students complete their clinical training all over the state of Oregon we have developed an online component to the course through a course management program called Sakai. The Sakai platform allows us to post the syllabus, learning objectives, assignment details, grading rubrics, and upload examples of projects from previous years. Each assignment builds on the previous assignment in a step-wise fashion to achieve the final product. Students submit all assignments (steps) via Sakai and the course director (Phyllis Barks) reviews all submissions and provides feedback to students. Once all assignments and revisions are approved, then the student receives approval to implement. They can then proceed with finding their target group (if not already done) and setting up an implementation date. Once they have a group, they submit a description of their actual group and how well it fits their intended target group. Groups must be community based, not clinical practice based. Once their group selection is approved, then they may implement their project. To demonstrate the importance of the COP, students are excused from their clinical training site to implement their project.
The Community Outreach Project is introduced during the last term of their didactic year. After introducing students to the overall goals and objectives of the COP, they select their topic (Step 1). Students are required to select a topic with a public health emphasis based on Healthy People 2020 as well as an intended target group who would benefit from an educational session on the topic. They are encouraged to select a topic based on personal interests and a topic in which they desire to develop expertise since they spend over six months working on this project. At the end of the academic year, face-to-face sessions detailing the timeline and steps of the COP are provided.

Students sign up for one of three COP groups. Group 1 participates in COP I during the first term of their clinical year and COP II during the second term; Group 2 participates in COP I during the second term and COP II during the third term; and Group 3 participates in COP I in third term and COP II in fourth term. Within each group are two smaller groups consisting of 6-7 students each. The small groups meet together for a three hour session with the course director during the transition week before they start their clinical rotations. For the small group session each student brings a flash drive with a draft of their methodology, 1-2 learning objectives, 1-2 survey questions related to those learning objectives, and 1-2 powerpoint slides of content related to each learning objective. The entire group then reviews each student's work and gives constructive feedback and suggestions. Students have found these sessions to be especially helpful since they learn not only from the feedback on their own work but also the work of their fellow students. Throughout the COP the members of their small group will provide feedback on their pre- and post-survey questions as well as peer review each others' final narrated presentation in which students explain how they implemented their project and present the results of their project. An important component of the COP is learning how to do both peer and self review.

Components of the Community Outreach Project I course:

Step 1 entails selecting their topic as previously described above.

Step 2 involves writing a 2-3 page public health need paper on their selected topic that defines the scope of the problem for their selected target group. They are required to include both national and state (if available) statistics related to their topic and their intended target group. Their literature review also includes data related to planning and designing their actual educational session, i.e., what has been successful in the past. The statistics will be included in their community presentation to help explain why the target group should be concerned about it. All data and statistics are required to match their actual intended target group.

Step 3 focuses on developing the methodology for the project. Students must detail how they intend to create and implement their project. The methodology includes the following components: project goal/anticipated outcome, target population, how they will find/recruit their target population, needed community resources, estimated project costs, a description of their project implementation and how they envision doing their actual presentation, and a project outline of the proposed major topics with an estimated timeline for each major topic and activity.

Step 4 involves having students write one overall presentation goal and five learning objectives for their presentation based on desired changes in knowledge. That is, students should identify five essential things they want their participants to learn from their presentation.

Step 5 focuses on creating a PowerPoint or detailed outline to be used in their community presentation. If using a PowerPoint, students are encouraged to limit text and use images as much as possible. They are also expected to consider health literacy and the educational level of the intended target group and to write content at the appropriate level.
Step 6 entails writing 1-2 survey questions related to each learning objective. Students are evaluated in part on how well their questions match their learning objectives. All questions must have an associated learning objective. Prior to submitting their survey questions for instructor review, they are required to review each others’ questions and provide peer feedback regarding how well they match the associated learning objectives, question format and wording, appropriate level for target group, and use of plausible distracters. Each student also evaluates the usefulness of each peer’s feedback and lists the top three changes they made to their survey questions based on peer feedback.

Step 7 is creating the final versions of the pre- and post-surveys. These contain some basic demographic information including appropriate questions to evaluate how well the actual group matches their intended target group, the previously developed survey questions to evaluate change in knowledge as a result of the presentation, and speaker/presentation evaluation questions on the post-survey.

Step 8 focuses on locating or creating appropriate patient education materials to use for handouts.

Step 9 is receiving approval from the course director to implement their project.

Step 10 is the implementation of their project by presenting to their community group. If allowed, they are required to get photos of them implementing their project.

The Community Outreach Project II course occurs after the student has implemented their project. Students tabulate their pre- and post-survey results, and include a simple statistical analysis of the individual questions using overall survey and individual question p-values. Finally, students create a narrated PowerPoint in which they describe the implementation, results, analysis, and conclusions of their project. They must also comment on how successful they were and discuss recommendations for improving the presentation in the future.

The narrated PowerPoint presentation must include the following components:

Introduction - review of national and state statistics; why they personally chose this topic, and their overall project goal and desired outcome.

Project Methodology & Implementation - description of how they created, set up and implemented their project including target group, difficulties encountered, location of presentation, number of times presented and number of participants, presentation goal and learning objectives, presentation format and length, project costs, patient education materials used and source, examples of 2-3 actual presentation slides used in implementation, and photos of the student implementing their project.

Project Results - demographic information, pre- and post-survey results with results by question and by total average score, percentage change from pre to post, individual question and overall p-values, speaker and presentation evaluation results.

Conclusions & Recommendations - interpretation of results and their meaning, how well their actual group matched their intended target group, how well they met their learning goal and objectives, project strengths and limitations, recommendations for improvement, impact of the project on the community, and the impact of the project on their future clinical practice as a physician assistant.

References - which are evaluated for quality and quantity.

All narrated presentations are posted on Sakai and evaluated by the course director plus at least one other faculty member. Each student reviews his/her own presentation using an evaluation form. In addition, each student reviews the presentations of each student within the same small group. Students
are required to include constructive comments. Both peer and self reviews are included with faculty reviews as part of the course grade. A modifier based on the quality of their peer and self reviews is then applied to the course average before the final letter grade is assigned. This modifier takes into account how many peer reviews they completed in their small group, the provision of constructive feedback including listing at least 2 strengths and 2 improvements for each review, and that their score is within 10 points of faculty reviews. The modifier also considers the quality of their self reflection in listing at least 2 strengths and 2 improvements for their own presentation.

One of the major reasons this project has been so successful is the overwhelmingly positive responses the students receive from the community participants. Their feedback, questions, and gratitude have all served to reinforce the need for community presentations and encouraged students to consider doing presentations after graduation.

We work collaboratively with faculty from the OHSU Department of Public Health & Preventive Medicine who teach some of the HPDP sessions during the Principles of Professional Practice I course. Physician assistant students and medical students take the same epidemiology course in the didactic year which is taught by faculty in the School of Medicine. The OHSU Educational Outreach Office has been instrumental in helping students identify groups and agencies in the community in need of educational programs. In addition, the PA program has established relationships with many public schools, senior centers, free health clinics, and support groups around the state.

**HEALTHY PEOPLE OBJECTIVE ADDRESSED:**

ECBP-12-16 Increase the inclusion of core clinical prevention and population health content in health professions education. This project is one example of how a health professions education program can support the Healthy People 2020 objectives of increasing core curriculum content in the area of clinical prevention and population health in a practical, experiential way. Because students may choose any of the Healthy People Topics for their COP, the impact of the COP on meeting the goals of Healthy People is broad. Similarly, the particular objectives addressed are extensive. Students may choose to focus on: HC/HIT-1: Improving the health literacy of a population; ECBP 2: Educational and Community-Based Programs in School Health Education; IVP-11: Injury and Violence Prevention - Reduce Unintentional Injury Deaths; NWS-10: Nutrition and Weight Status- Obesity and Children and Adolescents. The breadth of impact for this project is large.

**PROGRAM OR COURSE GOALS:**

Did you conduct a needs assessment as part of your planning process? □ Yes  □ No

Number of students enrolled/participating in 2010-2011 school year: 35

PAST 506 Community Outreach Project is a required 2-term course worth 4 credits that physician assistant students complete in their clinical year of training. For the 2010-2011 academic year there were 35 students enrolled in the course. For the 2011-2012 academic year, 38 students are enrolled in the course.

**PROFESSIONS INVOLVED:**

Faculty and students from the Physician Assistant profession are involved in this project. Because the health topics included in the Healthy People 2020 objectives are broad, and the variety of possible community audiences is similarly diverse, the involvement of other professions is great. The interdisciplinary collaboration among different professions is an additional benefit to this project. For example, students often collaborate with individuals in the following professions: social services, health
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educators, K-12 educators, public health officials, dieticians, spiritual leaders and ministers, and community health volunteers, to name a few.

LESSONS LEARNED/EVALUATION RESULTS:
The initial version of the COP involved having students create a presentation and a poster on a health topic that was showcased to faculty and fellow students during the week prior to graduation. Students were not required to actually implement their presentation but some did. When it became clear that the part of the COP that had the greatest impact on students was the presentation itself, the program decided to make this a requirement for all students. Receiving positive feedback and words of appreciation from the participants builds confidence in students and reinforces their desire to do more.

The COP process requires students to consider health literacy and reading levels when developing their curriculum. Although most graduates will not include pre- and post-survey questions for future presentations, doing this in the COP provides students a better understanding of research methodology.

One of the challenges students have faced is identifying an appropriate target audience. Over the last several years we have been successful in partnering with various organizations, schools, and support groups to assist students in this regard. In addition, the OHSU Educational Outreach Office has been instrumental in identifying and facilitating connections within the surrounding communities.

Another challenge for students has been finding time to implement their project while on clinical rotations. Because the program values the COP as an important component of their professional development, students are excused from their clinical training site in order to travel, prepare and implement their presentation.

Students are required to have an audience of at least 10 participants. Occasionally, students are not able to meet this goal and must repeat their presentation. Students are encouraged to try to find existing groups for their presentation. If they do decide to try to recruit participants, we encourage students to send reminders to participants when possible, but occasionally the turn-out is less than anticipated. This can be disappointing to students and requires additional time and energy to implement again. The low turn-out is often associated with attempting to recruit participants by using flyers and posters. A high turn-out is usually expected when students present at schools, existing groups such as support groups, free lunches at senior centers, and places of employment where the participant attendance is required. Despite these challenges, students are encouraged to choose topics and target populations that interest them, and guidance is offered to the students to encourage greater participation. For example, offering an incentive for attending a session, such as food or snacks, sometimes increases participation, especially if the topic focuses on nutrition. How the presentation is marketed or advertised can make a difference. Having an eye-catching title is more likely to draw an audience than a title that sounds too academic. Creating colorful flyers that are displayed in prominent places also seems to help.

We know through alumni correspondence that graduates continue to be involved in community-based education, and that their experience with the COP improved their skills and confidence in patient education within their practice settings. In addition, the program is contacted by various community groups and organizations requesting students to provide educational sessions. This feedback validates the need for such programs and promotes a positive impression of the physician assistant profession.

CONCLUSION:
In conclusion, we have found the Community Outreach Project to be an important and rewarding experience for our physician assistant students. Not only do students learn and apply the principles of
health promotion and disease prevention, research methodology, and patient education, but they develop a sense of duty to give back to communities in which they will clinically practice.

From our experience, the peer evaluation is an important component of the project, and we encourage other programs interested in developing a similar curriculum to include this as part of the process. To best incorporate constructive peer review, it is essential to provide guidelines on the expectations for peer review and include it as part of the course grade. When doing peer reviews, students are expected to provide constructive feedback that includes a minimum of two strengths and two improvements. Having a faculty advisor or mentor is important during this process as well. Our program is currently developing a survey that we plan to distribute to our alumni that will give us information regarding how often and in what capacity PA graduates incorporate these knowledge and skills in their clinical practices and in the communities in which they live.

**COMPANION MATERIALS: (Course syllabi, resource lists, tests, website, etc.)**

PAST 506 Community Outreach Project Syllabus

Assignment Instructions

Course Evaluation Results 2005-2011

Grading Rubrics

**PUBLICATIONS:**

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