Developing Self-Awareness of Medical Students and Faculty Members Through Reflective Activities

Amy B. Smith PhD
Lehigh Valley Health Network, amy_b.smith@lvhn.org

Kira K. Zwygart MD
USF MCOM- LVHN Campus

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Developing Self-Awareness of Medical Students and Faculty Members Through Reflective Activities

Amy B. Smith, PhD1,2, Kira K. Zwygart, MD2

1Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, Pennsylvania, 2University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine, Tampa, Florida

Abstract

The SELECT program of the University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine, through emotional intelligence theory and faculty coaches, educates students about leadership. Our faculty development process is based on an experiential model, followed by reflection and teaching to help faculty develop skills to serve as coaches. Throughout the four-year curriculum students and faculty reflect on content, experiences, and skills. The first class of SELECT students graduated in 2015 taking with them deep relationships and a plan for continued growth. A secondary benefit of the program was the positive impact on coaches and faculty.

Background

Research shows that students with higher levels of emotional intelligence have a stronger sense of self and knowledge that they can handle challenges, indicating that emotional intelligence may be a good predictor of success in both academics and careers.

In 2011, the University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine (Tampa, FL), in partnership with the Lehigh Valley Health Network (Allentown, PA), launched a new medical student curriculum called SELECT - Scholarly Excellence, Leadership Experiences, Collaborative Training. The SELECT program was designed with the ultimate goal of developing a cohort of new physicians into early leaders capable of transforming healthcare in the United States.

Emotional intelligence is at the core of the program with an emphasis on leadership, health systems and values-based patient-centered care. Emotional intelligence is at the core of the program with an emphasis on leadership, health systems and values-based patient-centered care.

Methodology

Students and coaches learn together about emotional intelligence, starting with self-awareness and self management in years 1 & 2 and focusing on social awareness and relationship management in years 3 & 4.

Methods used to teach, practice and foster self-awareness include:

- Emotional Social Competency Inventory (ESCI) – Students and coaches complete an ESCI at the start of the program and use the results to develop a Professional Development Plan (PDP).
- 1:1 Coaching – Students work with the same 2 coaches for 4 years. Faculty coaches work with the students to develop, review and implement Professional Development Plans.
- identify student achievements
- assist in setting new goals, recognizing and overcoming barriers.
- SELECT Professional Development Course (Years 1 – 4) – Small groups of students work in coaching cohorts facilitated by the coaches. Reflection papers are incorporated into the curriculum.
- Balint Groups – 3rd year students are assigned a Balint Group to discuss cases with trained facilitators.
- Mindfulness – the importance of mindfulness is taught the first week of medical school and the theme continues across the 4 years.
- Peer Pairs – Students are assigned peer pairs and work together throughout the program.
- Implicit Association Tests – reflection and discussion about bias.

Results

The 4th year students were assessed at the end of the year with a written assessment as well as a practical (standardized patient) assessment. There was a reflective component with each section. A short answer question about quality improvement included: How would you balance time constraints and stressors as a new physician both learning medicine and leading a quality project? Which of your values are most at risk and how would you maintain those values?

At the end of the SP assessment students had post encounter questions to self assess and reflect on what area of the encounter they felt most comfortable, least comfortable and what they want to work on.

The students completed a Professional Development Plan to take with them for continued growth.

Conclusion

Students and faculty have developed meaningful, lifelong relationships and are explicitly more self-aware and are using techniques more often to promote reflective practices, mindfulness, and resilience through gratitude and enhancing relationships with peers, patients and colleagues.

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