The Use Of Research Project Proposal In A Public Health Clerkship For Medical Students In A University In United Arab Emirates

( Dr. Azhar Rahma, Dr. Adam Balaz, Mr. Aminu Andullah, Prof. Sami Shaban, Miss Mouza Alshamis, Miss Salama AlKhori, Prof. Michal Grivna
United Arab Emirates University, United Arab Emirates

Introduction

The Public health clerkship had been offered by the Institute of Public Health (IPH) at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) to 5th year medical students since 2015. It focuses on knowledge, attitudes and skills to fulfill public health and occupational health responsibilities to patients, communities and the UAE population. It spans over variety of themes including biostatistics and basic epidemiology, epidemiology of communicable and non-communicable diseases, occupational medicine and environmental health.

The design of the public health clerkship at UAEU is based on the sociocultural theory and adopt a social pedagogy in which students are in apprenticeship with the community practice. Education is in correlation with community.

Part of the assessment is submitting and presenting a Research Protocol will allow students to ask a relevant research question and design a robust study to answer that question. The protocol will allow students at a future time to apply for funding, request ethical approval and proceed to conduct the study.

The aim of this study is to explore the satisfaction of the medical students with the current structure and content of the public health clerkship. Additionally, we aim to explore the impact of this clerkship on their skills.

Methodology

The target population of the study was fifth-year medical students in the College of Medicine and Health Sciences. Students completed the survey over the course of the last seven academic years, from 2015/2016 to 2021/2022. The evaluation survey contained 37 statements categorized into 5 themes, pre-course instructions, structure of the clerkship, academic staff, activities including the research project, seminars and assignments, and learning outcomes.

Results

The evaluation of the clerkship showed that nearly 80% of the students agreed that the clerkship program was relevant at this stage of medical training. Over 70% of the students reported enjoying their assignments, preparing for seminars, working on their research projects, receiving adequate information.

Conclusion

The overall improvement of the health of the public, not just Individuals, is the main goal of medical education. Hence, public health competency and knowledge are undisputedly a central necessity rather than an option or a mere luxury. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the need for skilled medical practitioners in public health, outbreak investigations and needs assessments. Medical students are the future taskforces, therefore training them on needs assessment and on designing population-based epidemiological studies is fundamental.

Public health proved to be important during the pandemic. Thank you IPH for equipping us the future physicians with the skills to do research! Dr. Khalid

(spokesman of the graduates at Graduates Farewell Ceremony 2022)