



Symposium on Educational Excellence 2024

Development of a Longitudinal Curriculum to Foster Effective Leadership Skills Amongst General Surgery Residents: What is the Impact on Trainee Well-Being?

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Keywords

Internship and Residency; Leadership; Students, Medical; Curriculum; Emotional Intelligence; Communication; Surgeons; surgical

Abstract

Background:

Surgeons are required to act as leaders, both in formal titled positions and informally in their day-to-day care of patients. Physicians colloquially referred to as the “triple threat” – clinicians, researchers, and educators – serve as leaders in all those roles. However, there is no formal leadership training for medical students or residents. Most surgical leadership curricula are tailored to faculty (and typically to those seeking or already in formal leadership positions), not to trainees.ⁱ Surgical trainees often develop leadership skills by modeling the behaviors of their more senior trainees and the attending surgeons. But the degree of efficacy in the leadership styles that they are modeling varies heavily. Furthermore, the culture in surgery is often perceived as hostile or malignant. By using a leadership training method of modeling behavior, there is a risk of perpetuating a culture that has the potential to harm the well-being of trainees and even harm the patients we serve.ⁱⁱ

Aims

We aim to develop a longitudinal leadership curriculum for General Surgery residents at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU). Create a foundation by which to shift the culture in the field of surgery and improve resident well-being.

Methods:

A needs assessment was performed via a combination of surveys and focus groups of residents in the OHSU General Surgery residency program. This assessment focused on the impact of senior residents' leadership skills on the well-being of junior surgical residents. This assessment revealed that effective and ineffective leadership were characterized by the presence or absence of 6 main behaviors: support and empowerment, team-building, management skills, emotional intelligence, effective communication, and teaching. occur on a quarterly and annual basis.

Effective leadership positively impacted residents' well-being, individual growth, and psychological safety. ⁱⁱⁱ We plan to create a longitudinal curriculum starting in the first year of residency. Quarterly sessions will occur during already-existing protected education time. Each of the five residency classes will participate in a level-specific session. By the end of a 5-year residency program, a resident will have completed 4 level-specific sessions per year, for a total of 20 sessions. These sessions will be designed to foster the effective leadership behaviors identified in the needs assessment. The sessions will include a combination of didactics, workshops, small groups, grand rounds, journal/book clubs, and audio/visual media. Assessments will occur on a quarterly and annual basis.

Future Directions:

We aim to roll out the first-year curriculum for the incoming class of general surgery interns. This class will be the first to complete all 5 years of the curriculum. Course assessments will occur at the end of each quarterly session and at the end of each year. These assessments will be used to adjust the curriculum for the next incoming class. We anticipate a full 5 years to complete the roll out across all levels of the curriculum.

References

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