

A Competency-Based Approach to A Substance Abuse Education Program

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Introduction

With anesthesiologists representing 12-15% of all physicians in treatment¹, it is imperative to develop a comprehensive educational program for residents, faculty, and their significant others. While alcohol is a common drug of abuse among physicians, anesthesiologists have the distinction of typically using narcotics that presents an increased potential for addiction, overdose, and death. Historically substance abuse programs among anesthesiology residencies have concentrated on narcotic abuse with little or no mention of alcohol abuse. Other authors have identified a significant gap in addiction education among anesthesiologists, with 24% of anesthesia faculty not receiving any education on substance abuse, 31% of residency programs providing only as an elective, and 39% excluding spouses². While Wearing Masks has been an effective educational tool, it is only a part of an effective curriculum. As we review our curriculum in accordance with the ACGME's Outcomes Project, we are presented with an opportunity to update substance abuse education, and incorporate the competencies professionalism, systems-based practice, and patient care into the curriculum.

Methodology

Currently, the Department of Anesthesiology at PSU-Hershey Medical Center provides an annual Substance Abuse Program. Attendance is mandatory for all new residents, highly encouraged for all other residents and new faculty and spouses are invited. The proposed Three-Tier Substance Program will consist of three separate sessions incorporated into the existing mandatory didactic schedule for all residents. By mainstreaming the topic of addiction into the regular didactic schedule it will help create a safe environment where addiction is treated like any other physiologic process for study. The first of three sessions will cover the physiologic, economic, and professional impact of addiction. The Wearing Mask Video will be viewed and discussed afterward. The second lesson will explore alcohol abuse and alcohol addiction and its impact. Discussion of alcohol being more socially accepted will be explored and discussed. The third lesson will be informal group discussions recapping the previous two lessons, and case studies will be reviewed and discussed.

Discussion

Development of a Three-Tier Substance Abuse program is proposed to provide a comprehensive educational program to the residents, faculty and significant others of the anesthesiology department. Incorporating a substance abuse program into the curriculum ensures that the appropriate time is given to address this issue adequately. Consideration needs to be given to more than an annual event; keeping substance abuse at the forefront and not just a required meeting attended once a year. We need to cultivate a safe environment not only for the residents, but their significant others, to ask questions and speak candidly about their concerns. Incorporation of the ACGME Competencies emphasizes the multi-factorial nature of this disease. This could be accomplished during the Three-Tier Program by establishing familiarity among the participants.

References

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2. Booth, John V. et al. Substance Abuse Among Physicians: A Survey of Academic Anesthesiology Programs. *Anesth Analg*. 2002; 95:1024-30.