

Drug Information Rounds

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Abstract

Introduction: US schools of pharmacy are mandated to provide their students with drug information (DI) skills. As such, some schools offer an advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE) in drug information. As part of this APPE, a daily DI round may be useful for students and faculty.

Description: At the International Drug Information Centre of LIU Pharmacy, students and faculty meet on a daily basis to discuss the “news of the day”, to review the questions received by the Centre, and to develop consensus responses. The round activity provides students with exposure to a large number and variety of questions, enhances students’ communication skills, nurtures life-long learning habits, and familiarises the faculty and staff with the students and with the questions handled by the Centre.

Implications: Similar DI round activities may be implemented in other academic and nonacademic practice settings.

Keywords: *Drug information, Centres, Rounds*

Background

Possessing good drug information (DI) skills is essential for the practice of pharmacy. In the United States (US), schools of pharmacy are required to teach these skills to their students (Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education, 2011). Drug information skills are often introduced in didactic courses and practiced in experiential rotations, which may include dedicated experiences in DI (Wang, Troutman, Seo, Peak & Rosenberg, 2006). At LIU Pharmacy (Arnold & Marie Schwartz College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences of Long Island University), an advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE) in DI is required for all student pharmacists. This clerkship takes place during the students’ final year of the program. For their DI APPE, most students are assigned to the campus-based International Drug Information Centre (IDIC). Generally, 6-9 students rotate through the Centre at any given time. Students are required to answer DI queries, present a research article (“journal club”), and make a drug formulary recommendation.

Drug Information Rounds

On most days, the faculty, staff, and students sit for a DI round, providing a structured activity within a generally unstructured day. During rounds, each student is expected to present the DI question that he or she is/was working on. These presentations serve to enhance the students’ communication skills and allow the audience to develop a consensus response. Since each faculty member is primarily responsible for his or her students, the rounds provide a venue for all of the Centre’s staff members to learn about all the questions handled by the Centre. Likewise, the rounds expose each of the students to

question types and/or search strategies that he or she may have not yet experienced and to a variety of therapeutic topics. Last but not least, the rounds also allow for a greater interaction between all the students and all of the faculty members and staff.

The round typically begins with a “news of the day” exercise, during which students report on a health-related news item that they encountered within the past day or so. This exercise was implemented with the intent to get students into the habit of keeping-up with ongoing changes affecting the profession. Since pharmacists often entertain consumer questions stemming from news reports in the lay media, special emphasis is placed on reporting these news items. Depending on time availability, the faculty may randomly select a student to present his/her “news of the day” or ask each of the students to report their respective news stories.

Following the “news of the day” reports, students are asked to report on the questions that they have been working on. Typically, students will first report on the questions which are still pending; that is, questions that are yet to be responded to. Once these responses are presented and discussed around the table, other responses are presented. When presenting the response, students are asked to indicate who the requester was, restate the “true” DI need, describe their research methodology in detail, including the order by which the resources were searched, and to provide a verbal response in the manner in which the response would be provided to the requester. Since students are also required to provide a written response to each of the questions, the students will routinely be asked to also read aloud the letters that they have written.

One of the challenges faced by the faculty is being able to convince the students that the questions handled at the

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Centre are typical of questions that they will encounter as pharmacists, regardless of their practice setting. As such, recently, the faculty at the Centre started requesting students who are employed as pharmacy interns to document the DI questions that they encounter at their employment sites and to present these questions at rounds. This exercise serves to expose students to a greater number of questions, and also, perhaps more importantly, to illustrate to students that the questions that they worked on are questions that most pharmacists do receive in “real life”.

While, at times, it is difficult to keep the students engaged in the discussions that ensue during rounds, the faculty members strive to maximise participation by all students. This is achieved by redirecting questions from one student to another and by posing questions for general discussion and asking each of the students to express his/her opinion concerning the matter at hand. Moreover, one of the clerkship’s evaluation criteria is the students’ professional conduct, which includes an assessment of the students’ participation in the Centre’s activities, including the DI rounds.

Implications

The DI-round activity appears to be an effective experience at the IDIC. Although formal surveys of students are not conducted to assess their opinions about this particular activity, when asked for feedback at the end of their rotation at the Centre, students frequently report satisfaction with this activity. Although time consuming, the faculty and the staff at the Centre believe that the benefits gained from the rounds justify this time commitment. While the activity described herein is conducted in a university-based DI centre, this activity can be implemented in a variety of practice settings. For instance, pharmacists in hospitals, including those pharmacists designated as “staff pharmacists” and those designated as “clinical pharmacists”, routinely handle a large number of DI requests on a daily basis. Periodically holding rounds to discuss these questions, be it only the frequently-asked questions or those which were particularly challenging, may serve as a staff development activity. When possible, this activity should also include participation of student pharmacists as this will provide a valuable learning experience. Finally, this activity need not be restricted to hospitals; rather, any institutional setting where DI questions are handled by multiple pharmacists can serve as a venue for a similar activity.

References

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