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Poster Title: Continuing Conversations in Cardiology: Reflective Writing Facilitates Teaching over A Virtual Platform

Poster category: COVID Education

Background: The Advanced Sciences Curriculum (ASC) has been created as part of the University of the new University of Colorado medical student "Trek" curriculum, with the intention of integrating basic science and clinical medicine as well as inspiring advanced learners as they approach challenges in medicine. The cardiology ASC course, Connections in Cardiology (CiC), has been conducted during the two primary surges of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, a virtual platform was utilized. Virtual learning platforms have enabled continued classroom and small group education, but detract from the subtle exchanges which prompt and facilitate further self-directed learning.

Innovation:

A daily reflective writing program was implemented to enhance learning relationships, encourage self-directed learning exploration, and improve course value for both educators and students.

- Learners participate in two weeks of didactic and small group learning, and two weeks of clinical rotations, as requirements of the ASC CiC course.
- At the conclusion of each day, learners submit daily reflective writing (at least 100 words) to course directors.
- Course directors respond within 12 hours with further discussion, and inclusion of both formative feedback and encouragement.
- Course evaluations will include specific items addressing impact of the reflection intervention.

Evaluation of impact:

To date, we have evaluated the impact of the reflection intervention through our overall course survey and informal focus groups of students and faculty (N=7 students; 2 faculty). Overall, faculty reported that the intervention facilitated meaningful two-way individualized education; expansion of discussion to broader or related topics; clarification of content; and the ability to provide timely and formative feedback. As evidenced by informal comments, students responded positively to the intervention. Preliminary data from a formal evaluation (N=3 students) demonstrated that the reflection process was a meaningful activity that contributed to a learning relationship with course directors, fostered curiosity and further self-directed learning, and helped students solidify and apply knowledge.

Discussion:

The primary use of virtual learning platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to awkward and stifled small group discussions and a disconnect between learners and teachers. Daily reflective writing offers a knowledge exchange and promotes discussion while simultaneously improving relationships between learners and faculty. Overall, this intervention has created a profound relationship between teachers and learners, led to joy and educational fulfillment, and reduced burn-out. Consequently, following the pilot course, reflective writing was integrated as a required tool and unique feature of the course. As a next step, we will finalize data from the students' formal evaluation to assess impact more fully. We anticipate that this intervention will further promote knowledge retention and foster continued intellectual curiosity; this method exemplifies pillars of adult learning

theory in tasking learners to engage in deciding what they learn, and practicing the application of new knowledge. It has been a meaningful complement to learning in our course, and we hope to utilize this tool in the future, as our elective is expanded to a required course for third year medical students, as an integral part of the Alpine phase of the Trek curriculum.