

Use of Cost Cards in Problem-Based Learning for Medical School Resource Stewardship Education

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Introduction: Healthcare costs are a substantial burden on patients and our economy. The Choosing Wisely® Students and Trainees Advocating for Resource Stewardship (STARS) campaign aims to integrate healthcare value curricula into medical education programs to combat this problem. At the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, students involved in this campaign created charts with a list of common medical tests and procedures, along with their associated costs to the patient ("cost card") for students to use while working through pre-clinical problem-based learning (PBL) cases.

Methods: Cost cards were created for each PBL case. Each card contained relevant tests and their associated costs. Cost cards were incorporated into the case materials for the 18-month pre-clinical PBL curriculum. Student attitudes regarding cost and educational impact were measured using end-of-year survey instruments.

Results: 131 students in the first-year class and 179 students in the second-year class completed the evaluation. Over one-fifth (21.0%) of students reported using the cards during every case or most cases. Most (91.9%) students found the cards improved their understanding of cost, and 86.1% of students reported that they at least occasionally consider cost when deciding which studies to order.

Discussion: Although a minority of students consistently used the cost card, the majority found that it augmented their understanding of cost. Cost cards are useful for introducing healthcare value concepts to medical students within a PBL curriculum during the preclinical years.