

Chapter 11

Passing the Baton: The Role of Targeted Transition Programs in Medical Education at an Urban Medical School

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ABSTRACT

Transitions in medical school are a recognized point of stress for learners. Overall, stress is a known aspect of any period of transition, where the unknown looms large and new skills need to be acquired to achieve mastery of the next step. As the medical needs of the population grow, medical schools are admitting larger and more diverse classes. These students will undergo several major points of transition in their undergraduate medical education careers including the period of matriculation to the first year and the transition from the preclinical years into the clinical years. The George Washington School of Medicine has developed a longitudinal approach including two specific programs to support students during these recognized points of academic transition. The Prematriculation Program (PMP) and the Foundations of Clinical Practice course address the specific needs of these stages. The authors contend that an intentional approach to support students at periods of known academic risk is a beneficial aid to student success.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to describe two successful programs at an urban medical school which address common points of transition in medical education. The authors will emphasize the process of the development of these programs with attention to future steps to increase the impact these programs can have on medical students at known points of critical transition.

BACKGROUND

A Brief History of the George Washington School of Medicine and Health Sciences (GW SMHS)

Founded in 1824 as a medical department within Columbian College (now known as The George Washington University), the George Washington (GW) Medical School was the eleventh medical school founded in the US and the first in the nation's capital. GW has long offered curricular innovations designed with the goal of graduating “Physician Citizens” committed to local, national, and global public service through excellent patient care, scholarly inquiry, leadership, and advocacy for change and innovation.

GW has developed a comprehensive curriculum with aspects of the curriculum intentionally designed with the aim to support select student cohorts through known periods of academic and professional identity transition in medical education. The authors will discuss two GW programs which highlight the importance of curricular innovations to support UME students through transitions. As evidenced from student feedback, these programs have been associated with success in mitigating these transitions.

The Pre-Matriculation Program (PMP) is an academic four-week summer pre-enrollment program which provides pre-clinical content exposure to prepare select incoming medical students for the academically rigorous learning environment of the GW medical school. After the second year, the baton is passed to the Foundations of Clinical Practice course—a course which prepares students to make the move from the preclinical to the clinical years. Finally, the baton is passed to the Transition to Residency course, which prepares fourth-year students for internship and residency. The authors will discuss the first two courses, highlighting their more innovative aspects. All in all, these courses are specially designed to bring learners to the next step of their learning and professional identity development.

Pre-Matriculation Programs

Background

Most educators are united in their commitment to preparing students for academic success in medical school. Over the last several years, many schools have implemented Pre-Matriculation Programs to help prepare students transition into the first year (Crump and Fricker 2015, Schneid et al, 2018). As mentioned earlier, the phenomenon of the stressors associated with transition is not unique to medical schools. However, it is arguable that what is unique to medical education is the requirement that students be able to navigate a large volume of scientific information in a short amount of time (Schneid et al, 2018). Medical school is rigorous for all, but it is known that there are certain factors that predispose

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