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Verbal Communication Improvement Workshop for Self-Identified P3 Pharmacy Students: A Model for a Successful Collaboration with a Communications Department

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Comments
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Verbal Communication Improvement Workshop for Self-Identified P3 Pharmacy Students: A Model for Successful Collaboration with a Communications Department
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What is the problem?
Difficulties with verbal and nonverbal communication skills were identified in select P3 students by faculty and preceptors.

Is this widespread?
Informal (Listerv) survey of Offices of Experiential Education nationally revealed:
• There are students who can pass didactic courses but not practice site experience due to difficulties with communication skills.
• Faculty struggle with how to help these students.

Does the literature provide any guidance?
Two types of studies:
• Studies of how we assess communication skills at different points in the curriculum: most recently, Kabota et al. (2011), Rao (2011), Mesquita et al. (2010), Mort & Hansen (2010).
• Studies describing course methodologies for teaching communication skills: most recently, Kane-Gill & Smithburger (2011) D’Antonio (2010), Boesen et al. (2009).
• Only Parkhurst (2007) described course aimed specifically at a linguistically diverse population, in which communication issues often arise.

Complicating factors: time & resources
• Faculty already stretched with teaching, experiential responsibilities, R&T requirements, administrative duties.
• Immediacy of need so P3 students can succeed in their Advanced rotations (APPEs).

Our solution!
• Collaborate with an academic communications department to offer self-identified (and faculty-encouraged) students a verbal communication workshop.
  • Purpose: Build student confidence, comfort, and technical skills in verbal (and nonverbal) communication.

Procedure
Ten self-selected, third-year Pharmacy students participated in a four-week verbal communication skills workshop, twice a week, two hours per session.

Before the workshop
Students completed a 24-item Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) and a questionnaire about their backgrounds and public speaking experience.

During the workshop
Instructor led discussions on verbal communication topics and students delivered prepared or impromptu presentations.

Instructor presentation topics included:
• Dealing with speech anxiety
• How to organize a presentation
• Working on presentation delivery
• Handling questions

Student presentations included:
• Self-introductions and elevator speeches
• Informative presentations based on their interests
• Impromptu topics suggested by class
  • A pharmacy-based informative presentation
  • Answering questions from the audience

Presentations were viewed in class for constructive criticism, and digital video recordings were given to students.

NOTE: Workshop took place away from WSop building, to increase student comfort level with workshop experience.

After the workshop
Each student again completed the PRCA and a course evaluation form based on the relevant questions from the WSop course evaluations.

Results:
• Eight of 10 students completed workshop.
• PRCA scores improved for six students.
• Workshop evaluations were high.
• Comments were helpful for future planning.

What are the implications of this program?
Communication skills for pharmacy students who have significant issues with verbal communication can be addressed through collaboration with other schools and departments on campus. The shortage of pharmacy faculty makes it imperative that we look beyond our own programs to seek remedial help for our students. This study provides a model for a way to effectively partner with a communications department to provide additional, remedial instruction for our students.