

The Introduction of Cultural Competency Standards in an Undergraduate Pre-Health Curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

- The importance of cultural competence in professional health programs is widely recognized, yet there is not currently a standardized way of educating students.
- Cultural competence is defined by the Association of American Medical Colleges as a “set of congruent behaviors, knowledge, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, organization, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations.”
- Students entering the healthcare field must be able to provide culturally relevant care to their patients, because it can directly affect healthcare outcomes.
- The present study argues that a teaching of cultural competence, self-awareness, and professionalism can and should begin earlier in the learning process during undergraduate schooling.
- In order for students to best understand these principles, they must be introduced to cultures different from their own in a clinical setting.
- The example used in this study is Child Family Health International (CFHI), a non-profit dedicated to partnering with local communities.

OBJECTIVE

To analyze 4-16-week Child Family Health International (CFHI) immersion programs and compare learning outcomes to cultural competency, self-awareness/reflection, and professionalism standards of accreditation in six health science professional programs offered at The Ohio State University.

METHODS

- Reviewed the accreditation standards for six professional health science programs offered at The Ohio State University.
- Categorized the standards that deal with cultural competency, self-awareness/reflection, and professionalism.
- Reviewed four CFHI programs for activities and learning objectives and understood how they contribute to the accreditation standards previously categorized.

RESULTS

Analysis of CFHI 4-16-week Activities		
EXPERIENCE	ACTIVITIES	LEARNING OUTCOMES
Child Health and Social Determinants in Accra, Ghana	Engage with medical professionals in the Outpatient Department, Emergency Room, and the various wards to learn about the healthcare and also the prevention and management of various diseases. Ex: Public Health Unit Shadow the nurses and other public health professionals in the hospital, child welfare clinics in outstations, school visits, health education and awareness outreach opportunities.	See how these professionals provide care in a resource-poor environment, overcoming challenges such as the financial and structural constraints of the healthcare system itself and the social determinants that lead to illness in children. Learn about the social causes and the health implications of certain diseases in the population and communities of Ghana.

RESULTS (CONT.)

Review of Accreditation Standards	
DISCIPLINE	CULTURAL COMPETENCY
Medicine Degree: MD	<p>7.2. Impact of behavioral and social factors—recognize potential health-related impact on patients of behavioral and socioeconomic factors</p> <p>7.6. Cultural competence and health care disparities—Medical students to learn to recognize and appropriately address...cultural biases in themselves, in others, and in the healthcare delivery process.</p> <p>7.7. Medical Ethics—requires its medical students to behave ethically in caring for patients and in relating to patients’ families and others involved in patient care</p>
	SELF-AWARENESS
	<p>6.3. Self-directed and lifelong learning—self assessment of learning needs; independent identification... of relevant information</p> <p>Element 6.6. Service-learning—Student reflection on the relationships among their participation in the activity, their medical school curriculum, and their roles as citizens and medical professionals.</p>
	PROFESSIONALISM
	<p>3.5. Learning environment/Professionalism—ongoing development of explicit and appropriate professional behaviors...all individuals are treated with respect</p> <p>7.9. Interprofessional communication skills—function collaboratively on health care teams</p> <p>7.6. Cultural competence and health care disparities-- development of core professional attributes (e.g., altruism, accountability) needed to provide effective care in a multidimensional and diverse society</p>

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

- In health professional programs, training on cultural competency is normally incorporated into larger, required courses in the form of case studies or discussions (Dogra et al., 2010).
- In order to best enhance students’ cultural competence, self-awareness, and professionalism, real-life experiences will be most beneficial and can start earlier in their educational career.
- The results of this study show incredible overlap between the intended learning outcomes of 4-16-week CFHI immersion programs and the accreditation standards of six professional health science programs offered at The Ohio State University.
- Local options: Columbus Free Clinic, and also specialty clinics like La Clinica Latina, Asian Health Initiative Free Clinic, Noor Community Clinic, etc.
- Students must keep in mind community considerations and allow themselves to learn from the locals, instead of trying to alter their cultural habits.
- This study has shown that undergraduate students can begin to conceptualize and work on health professional program level standards earlier in their career.
- Ethical, community-led learning programs provide a good option from enhancing cultural awareness as part of the undergraduate experience that can be beneficial in graduate programs

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