Cardiopulmonary Mentoring Program: Survey to assess student understanding of, and interest in, Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation

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INTRODUCTION

The NYU Langone Health Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation Department participates in a physical therapy mentoring program. Doctor of Physical Therapy students, under the guidance of a “Master Clinician” physical therapist, observe for a full day, 1 day a week, for 6-7 weeks, during which they have the opportunity to learn about core components of cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation, including exercise and psychosocial aspects, as well as our approach to delivering care.

PURPOSE

The aim of the survey is to determine if physical therapy students who participate in the Cardiopulmonary observation, under the mentorship of a Master Clinician, have an improved understanding and interest in Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation.

METHOD

The Master Clinician oversees the use of the students’ time and provides education regarding the benefits of cardiopulmonary rehabilitation and our methods for patient care. The students spend most of their time in the outpatient setting, where they observe individual treatments sessions, group exercise classes, stress tests, education seminars and intake evaluations, as provided by physical therapists, exercise physiologists, nurses and the dietician. The students learn how exercise prescriptions and treatment goals are determined based on patient diagnosis and personal goals, history, current and past level of function, and interpretation of tests and measures. Tests include the 6-minute walk test and stress tests, from which target heart rate is calculated. The students learn about taking vital signs, EKG interpretation, auscultation, patient education, exercise progression, etc. The 6-7 week design allows for the students to witness patient progress.

The students also observe with physical therapists in acute care and inpatient rehabilitation. This unique opportunity allows the students to understand the continuum of care from hospital admission to independent exercise approach to delivering care.

Following completion of the observational experience, each student was emailed a brief questionnaire of 5 questions that evaluated their experience and an explanation of purpose. The responses were placed on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating a poor experience, 3 a neutral experience and 5 a positive experience.

RESULTS

The questionnaire, as seen in Figure 1, was completed by 8 students who observed at our site during four academic semesters during 2016-2017.

We converted the scores into percentages, with the following results:

Question 1: 98% strongly agreed the experience improved understanding of Cardiac Rehabilitation.
Question 2: 95% strongly agreed the experience improved understanding of Pulmonary Rehabilitation.
Question 3: 98% strongly agreed to have a better understanding of how vital signs influence treatment.
Question 4: 95% strongly agreed to have been able to utilize knowledge from the observation in practice.
Question 5: 95% strongly agreed that participation in the program increased interest in Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation

The average overall score was 4.8/5 and the average percentage of “strongly agree” was 96.2%

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the survey support our hypothesis that participation in the Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation observation improves student interest and enhances student knowledge and understanding of Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation beyond the classroom.

The results indicate that the observation experience has the potential to boost our professions by engaging student enthusiasm for this particular field. We encourage other programs to create similar mentoring programs, in order to expose students to the benefits of and need for Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation.

REFERENCES

American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation: https://www.aacvpr.org