Healthcare Management Education for Physicians in Training

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Abstract

A “business of healthcare” curriculum was designed to address gaps in the current medical education system. The practice of medicine has become increasingly complex as scientific knowledge has advanced exponentially. At the same time, healthcare systems have become more complex with global implications of health policy, increasing demand, inadequate access to care, inefficiency, inconsistent quality of services, and non-uniform processes. With growing recognition that many of these challenges are truly business problems, the industry is slowly realizing the need to change the way physicians get trained. Physicians often bemoan that they wish they had more business training in their educational background. A recent study by AAMA demonstrates that this shortcoming is recognized as early as medical school. A more recent national survey chronicles not only the intense desire for business knowledge by physicians, but also the documented benefits of such training for healthcare system outcomes. We set about to develop integrated and efficient means to address these issues both within the undergraduate and graduate medical education programs.

Methods/Implementation

A partnership was developed between the University of Texas Medical School at Houston (UTHealth) and the University of Houston-Clear Lake School of Business to provide a MBA program tailored to the needs of physicians. Founding covenants of the program were that it would be a dual degree program to be available to be taken at the business school. We are currently in the process of developing the dual degree curriculum (UTMB example) is detailed in Figure 4. The program to other local institutions and by way of online education will be easily adapted to an offering for 4th year medical students and faculty physicians (constructed as separate curricula as discussion sessions around fiscal stability of the offering. Business school faculty must be involved, but will not lead the discussions). By the time the program begins, it will be easily available to remote institutions as well.

Background

Health care, the largest industry in the U.S., faces many challenges such as skyrocketing costs, increasing demand, inadequate access to care, inefficiency, inconsistent quality of services, and non-uniform processes. With growing recognition that many of these challenges are truly business problems, the industry is slowly realizing the need to change the way physicians get trained. Physicians often bemoan that they wish they had more business training in their educational background. A recent study by AAMA demonstrates that this shortcoming is recognized as early as medical school. A more recent national survey chronicles not only the intense desire for business knowledge by physicians, but also the documented benefits of such training for healthcare system outcomes. We set about to develop integrated and efficient means to address these issues both within the undergraduate and graduate medical education programs.

Results

The number of joint MD-MBA programs in America has grown from six to 65 in 20 years. (From 2011 and 2012 alone, the number increased by 25 percent.) More than half of D.M.D./M.B.A. programs started after the year 2000. Ours is one of the newer programs, however our partnership is with a business school that offers a Masters of Hospital Administration (MHA) in addition to the MD-MBA. Coursework is seamless between the MHA & MBA programs for the MD-MBA students.

At this point, several of the more advanced medical students need just a few more classes to become our first graduates of the dual degree program. Currently, at UTHealth, we are enrolling about 4-5 students per class in the dual degree program. (There are an estimated 650 dual degree students nationwide.) Our plan is to train the careers of graduated students as closely as they will permit an engaged with the medical student as they would in residency.

Conclusions & Future Directions

The Certificate Program is designed with a combination of online, asynchronous delivery of the educational content. It will be easily adapted to an offering for 4th year medical students and faculty physicians (constructed as separate curricula as discussion sessions are most useful among peer groups). Future goals include career tracking and follow up questionnaires for program participants. Together with the MD-MBA dual degree program, healthcare management education will be fully integrated into our curriculum.

References

1. http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/ama-wire/post/students-wish-were-learning-med-school

Contact Information

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TABLE 1. Survey Questions & Results for Residents/Fellows: (number of responses in each category expressed as red numeral)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>NOT SURE</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think you would find this offering valuable?</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would it help you in meeting ACGME core competencies such as systems education?</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you sign up for this elective assuming the price was reasonable?</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you be willing to still take night or weekend call during this elective month (classes 5-7)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like to have the course material delivered?</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a reasonable tuition cost for this program (estimate 100-120 contact hours of instruction)?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
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Note: This survey was designed to gather information about residents’ preferences and interest in a healthcare management education course. The survey questions were designed to assess the potential impact of the course on residents’ professional development and career aspirations. The results of the survey indicated a high level of interest in the course, with a majority of respondents expressing a willingness to sign up for the elective if the price was reasonable. The survey also highlighted the importance of course material delivery and the need for a reasonable tuition cost that would not significantly impact residents’ financial situation.

Figure 1: Online Master of Business Administration (54 credit hours, 18 courses)

Figure 2: MBA, Dual Degree (12 hours)

Figure 3: MD/MBA Dual Degree (12 hours)

Figure 4: MD/MBA Dual Degree (12 hours)