Complementary Medicine: A One Day Course

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The one-day 2003 Interclerkship course introduced CAM and was designed to enhance the knowledge, attitude, and skills of third year medical students.

Students experienced a wide array of CAM modalities, interacted with CAM practitioners, and learned the state of the art of evidence-based CAM.

TEACHING FORMAT

Pediatric Session introduced definitions, categories, epidemiology, issues concerning lack of communication with patients, efficacy/safety, legal/ethical issues and evidence-based resources.

Herbs/supplements included uses, side effects, drug interactions, pharmacology, and general precautions—discussed in a "Jeopardy" game format.

Breakout experiential sessions of mind-body, qigong, yoga, acupuncture, osteopathy, chiropractic, reflexology, massage, craniosacral therapy, and reiki, conducted by licensed and credentialed therapists. Therapists also described their training, philosophy of their modality, indications for use and interaction with MD's relating to patients they cared for.

Small peer teaching groups facilitated by MD practitioners well versed with CAM ensured that each students heard about all of the modalities presented that day. An interactive discussion of the role of CAM in clinical practice was also conducted.

Patient presentations of personal experiences using CAM.

RESULTS

• Pre/post test matched analysis of 90% of sample (n=45).
• Course evaluation response rate of 76% (n=38).
• Students reported increased understanding of all knowledge topics (e.g. herbs, acupuncture). Average of clustered items: pre=2.69, post=3.82, t44=-10.54, p<.01.
• Confidence in skills locating the best evidence, discussing CAM, and referring patients improved. Average of clustered items: pre=2.42, post=3.77, t44=-13.38, p<.01.
• 95% agreed this provided training “not obtained elsewhere in medical education.” Students valued the “Jeopardy” session and the hands-on learning.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the third year students attending the Interclerkship showed significant improvements in knowledge about CAM and reported increased confidence in their ability to communicate with patients using available CAM evidence. A majority of students agreed that this Interclerkship provided training “not obtained elsewhere in medical education.” They requested more personal experiences of CAM modalities.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Impact on the Interclerkship

• 2004 Interclerkship modifications:
  - shorter didactic sections
  - two breakout group experiences of CAM modalities
• Most recent student feedback from the 2004 Interclerkship:
  - “The hands-on approach and interactive learning was great! Thank You!”
  - “Helped with introduction to a whole realm of new modalities for patients”
• For AY 2004-2005, we will plan to include the entire class of 100 students in the Interclerkship.

Current and Future CAM Curriculum in the Medical School

The University of Massachusetts is one of six pilot schools in the Educational Development of Complementary and Alternative Medicine Grant (NCCAM) integrating CAM into the full breadth of the medical school curriculum.

• The NCCAM grant curricular initiative has allowed UMass to bring CAM topics into the core curriculum.
• Anatomy = Experimental Anatomy through Hnad (Neck Massage)
• Pharmacology = Herbs and Supplements
• Epidemiology - Discussion of CAM journal articles
• Patient Physician and Society course – Introduction of core CAM information
• Further curricular enhancements planned in the Neurosciences, and Clinical Clerkship years
• A CAM link through our library website is now operational and will allow students and faculty to directly access CAM reference websites.
• More focused Faculty Development in CAM/Integrative medicine is planned for the coming years.