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Building a Rural LIC in an Accelerated Curriculum: Hubs, Spokes, Flat Tires, and Hovercraft

Jacob Prunuske MD, MSPH; Heather Roth; Ellen M. Schumann, MD, MS; Lisa Dodson, MD

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Topic:

Across the country there are geographic maldistributions of physicians. Many regional campuses have a mission to meet local workforce needs. Regional campuses must balance comparability with the institution's main campus curriculum with sufficient innovation to meet the regional campus mission. Clinical training in a rural environment has many challenges, including limited access to specialty physicians, a greater proportion of health care delivered in the outpatient setting, lower patient volumes, fewer preceptors, increased travel time, and communication challenges for academic and administrative aspects of clinical experiences. The Medical College of Wisconsin – Central Wisconsin (MCW-CW) offers an accelerated curriculum that allows progression from matriculation to graduation in 3 years, includes a 4-year option, and has a distributed model for clinical training. In this session, we presented the challenges of development and implementation of a rural longitudinal integrated curriculum at an accelerated regional campus, described how these challenges are being addressed, and discussed future plans and implications for other institutions.

Short Description:

Across the country there are geographic maldistributions of physicians. Many regional campuses have a mission to meet local workforce needs. Regional campuses must balance comparability with the institution's main campus curriculum with sufficient innovation to meet the regional campus mission. Clinical training in a rural environment has many challenges, including limited access to specialty physicians, a greater proportion of health care delivered in the outpatient setting, lower patient volumes, fewer preceptors, increased travel time, and communication challenges for academic and administrative aspects of clinical experiences. The Medical College of Wisconsin – Central Wisconsin (MCW-CW) offers an accelerated curriculum that allows progression from matriculation to graduation in 3 years, includes a 4-year option, and has a distributed model for clinical training. In this session, we presented the challenges of development and implementation of a rural longitudinal integrated curriculum at an accelerated regional campus, described how these challenges are being addressed, and discussed future plans and implications for other institutions.

Four questions that were posed to/considered by session participants:

- 1) *What unique challenges are associated with an accelerated curriculum?*
- 2) *What are common challenges of clinical training in rural settings?*
- 3) *What are the advantages and disadvantages of a longitudinal integrated clerkship in an accelerated curriculum?*
- 4) *How might other institutions benefit from lessons learned in creating a rural longitudinal integrated clerkship in the context of an accelerated curriculum?*

Three take home points from our session:

- 1) *Developing, nurturing, and sustaining relationships at all levels between campus and community partners, preceptors, institutions, and communities is essential.*
- 2) *Each training site is unique, and schools should seek to identify and respond to local needs and take advantage of local strengths.*
- 3) *Flexibility in scheduling and an emphasis on competency achievement, rather than time, helps ensure comparable educational experiences across sites*

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