

Medical Education Research

'Impact of Shortened Clinical Clerkships on Student Performance and Clerkship Assessment'

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Background: Schools may have to adjust clinical clerkship lengths due to overarching curricular change or in response to external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Previous literature examining the effect of shortened clerkships on student performance is mixed. Wake Forest School of Medicine shortened third year clerkships by an average of 25% during 2018-2019 academic year. This change uniquely positioned us to examine the impact of this change on student experience at our institution.

Objectives: Our study aimed to discover differences in student performance on standardized national exams, performance on objective structured clinical exams (OSCEs), and student clerkship evaluations between the 2017-2018 (traditional) and 2018-2019 (shortened) academic years.

Methods: Two cohorts of students were included in data analysis. Cohort demographics, Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT), United States Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE) Step 1, National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) subject exam, and USMLE Step 2 CK scores were analyzed. Institutional OSCE performance and end of clerkship evaluations were included in analysis. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Chi square analysis.

Results: One hundred four students were included in each of the two cohorts. There were no differences with respect to MCAT, USMLE Step 1, NBME, or Step 2 CK scores. Six OSCE cases were analyzed for student performance differences, with one OSCE case showing better average student scoring in each of the curricular cohorts. 77% of the traditional curriculum cohort and 78% of the shortened curriculum cohort rated clerkships as "good" or "excellent". Using Chi square analysis, the pediatric clerkship was rated higher by students in the traditional curriculum, and the psychiatry clerkship was rated higher in the shortened curriculum.

Conclusions: Decreasing the length of each clerkship by up to 25% did not have significant effect on NBME subject exam or Step 2 CK exam performance. The majority of OSCE exams showed no scoring

differences, and student satisfaction remained high across all clerkships. We feel confident in advising students that participating in a shortened curriculum should not have a detrimental effect on clerkship satisfaction and Step 2 CK.