

Leadership for Future Physicians: 2-Week Elective



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BACKGROUND

As medical students progress through the medical system, their importance as leaders increases. Eventually, these future physicians will be leading medical teams and influencing the medical profession. Most of these students will receive very little formal training in leadership. As part of the Healthcare Delivery Science, Management and Policy Distinction Track at the Carver College of Medicine, University of Iowa, students are required to complete a 2-week elective. Other students are welcome to enroll. The elective was first offered in 2014 and became a required part of the distinction track in 2015.

Personal Insight

- "I went into this course because I had to for the HDSM track but am very grateful that I did! I learned so much about leadership that I can use not only in my career in the future, but also in my everyday and personal life. Thank you for offering this course!"
- "I greatly enjoyed the class and I'm glad I took it. The instructor did a great job, and I believe it was more useful to me than the lab med EKG class offered for 2 weeks. This class was optional for me, and I could have taken a two-week vacation instead and if given the option to repeat that decision I would take this class again, it taught me really important soft skills that I will use and I think it was a great decision to take this class."

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this elective is to provide third- and fourth-year medical students with formal leadership training in multiple aspects of leadership. The goals of the elective involve:

- Assisting medical students in identifying their approach to leadership and understanding the various types of leaders
- Expose medical students to multiple methods for dealing with common challenges faced by leaders
- Using a case-based approach, help prepare medical students for possible leadership challenges/issues and tools for managing these situations
- Provide medical students opportunities to interact with leaders within multiple industries and community.

METHODS

During the first 2 hours of class, topics pertinent to effective leadership are covered with articles that are medically focused on leading. These include leadership style, conflict management, team development, emotional intelligence, ethics and values, organizational culture, motivation and followers, impostor syndrome, change management, and future of leadership.

The last hour is reserved for guest speakers from all walks of life. Examples include deans of colleges, presidents and CEOs of local businesses, faculty from various academic disciplines, physicians from different specialties, and senior level administrators from the hospital. The guest speakers are asked to talk about their path to leadership and answers questions from the students.

Guest Speakers

- "Far and above the guest speakers, but the reason they were so effective in helping my understanding is largely based on the questions and reading designed by the instructor. It was a wise move to make pre-written questions for speakers to have ready when the class wasn't asking questions - this allowed good discussion without making those in the class uncomfortable."
- "The guest speakers were great to be able to learn more about how they rose to the positions they are in and how I may be able to follow in their footsteps as I work to become a more effective leader."
- "The guest speakers and allowing us to ask questions about what they experienced during their time. Allowing us to ask difficult questions to them and getting truthful answers."

Outside class assignments involve keeping a daily journal, watching a movie of their choice with emphasis on the main leader(s), interviewing a leader with designated questions, watching TED talks on leadership, drafting their leadership philosophy, and completing multiple self-assessment instruments. Multiple instructors with knowledge and experience in the topics are used.

The course has been conducted in both face-to-face and virtual formats. With slight modifications, both formats are doable.

LESSONS LEARNED

Based on feedback from students and instructor experiences, helpful insights include:

- Incorporate more interactivity (small groups, cases, team competition, etc.) over the 2 didactic hours
- Use medical literature focused on leadership; was unable to locate a textbook suitable for this course
- TED talks are a great source of materials to initiate discussions
- Journaling is an important and integral requirement as it requires self-reflection
- There are many faculty interested in teaching aspects of leadership

Self-Assessment

- "The best contribution was forcing me to self reflect. I learned a lot about myself during these past two weeks that I think will make a me a more effective leader."
- "I think the constant encouragement to reflect and evaluate ourselves was helpful in critically evaluating my strengths and weaknesses as a leader. Encouraging us to journal our thoughts is also helpful in this endeavor."
- "The multiple self-assessments were great tools to help me learn more about myself and I think they were a valuable part of the course that I will utilize in the future. Additionally, I feel that that all of the topics of the individual days were very appropriate and useful."

CONCLUSIONS

The future of medicine needs strong leaders. Leadership training should begin as early as possible. The effectiveness of this course is due to the multiple formats, instructors, self-assessments, guest speakers, and interactive materials. The course can be conducted in a 2-week format or extended over a longer period using a face-to-face or virtual format. The poster presenter is willing to share his syllabus for more details regarding the course.

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