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Improving Resident Understanding of Healthcare Business and Policy through the Development of a High-yield and Dynamic Educational Series

John Legge M.D., Scott Vota D.O.



Introduction

Residents have a strong desire to be engaged in and learn about the financial and societal impact of healthcare delivery and reform initiatives.^{1,2} In order to address this need, a Business and Health Policy Educational Series was created.

Background

During the Program Evaluation Committee (PEC) meeting, as part of the annual review of the ACGME education curriculum for the VCU Neurology Residency Program, a deficiency was identified with regard to resident self-perception of understanding of the business and policy of healthcare and reform initiatives. This deficiency is one shared at many programs across most specialties.¹ A recommendation was put forth to improve education in this area, and so an interactive educational series was developed to address certain topics within the business and healthcare policy spectrum, including:

- *How does healthcare work?*
- *Practice income, expenses, & RVUs*
- *Rising medication costs*
- *Salary realities*

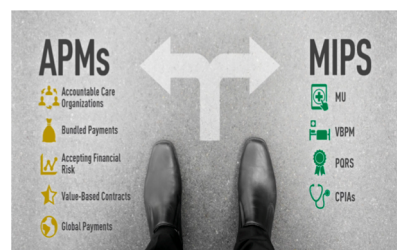
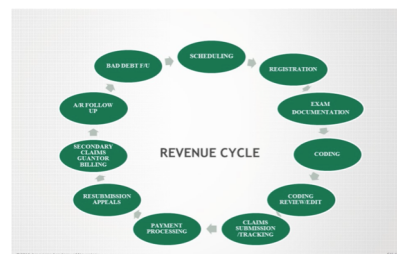
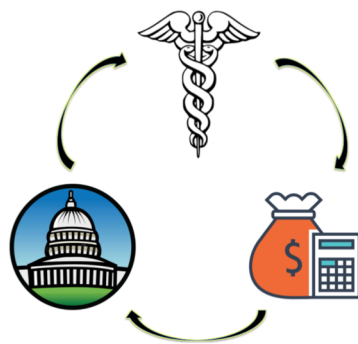
Objectives

With participation in the Business and Health Policy Educational Series, learners will be able to:

1. *Recognize fundamental principles of the business and policy of healthcare*
2. *Describe basic healthcare delivery mechanics in the United States*
3. *Appreciate the role of insurance claims, RVUs, and physician/practice income and expenses*

References

1. Grevsen SR, Wassermann T, Payne P, Mullan F. Teaching health policy to residents—three-year experience with a multi-specialty curriculum. *J Gen Intern Med* 2009 Dec;24(12):1322-6.
2. Long T, Khan AM, Henien S, Hass D, Katz MC. Resident and fellow assessment of health policy attitudes and advocacy priorities. *Conn Med* 2014 May;78(5):283-7.
3. AAN Career Development. American Academy of Neurology website <https://www.aan.com/tools-and-resources/residents-fellows/career-development/>. Accessed March 1, 2018.



Design/Methods

Combining lectures with videos and hands-on workshops, an audience-engaging educational series focused on improving residents' understanding of healthcare business and policy initiatives was created. Materials from the American Academy of Neurology, the Khan Academy, and other sources were drawn on to create brief, 20-30 minute sessions. Both slide presentation and video lecture formats were utilized, with interactive workshops used to enhance other sessions.

Sessions occurred as part of a weekly scheduled conference:

- *Week 1: How does healthcare work?*
- *Week 2: Overview of Practice income*
- *Week 3: Revenue sources*
- *Week 4: Expenses to a Practice*
- *Week 5: What is an RVU?*
- *Week 6: How does a compensation plan work?*
- *Week 7: Salary realities / Importance of Benefits*
- *Week 8: Fishbowl potpourri*

Results

Results of the End of the Year Educational Survey by residents showed robust support (86% positive support, $n=14$) for the curriculum initiative. The PEC, composed of both faculty and residents, unanimously voted to continue the program ($n=10$). Resident feedback showed that they felt they had advanced their careers by improving their understanding of basic healthcare mechanics, economics, and policy.

Summary

Having an understanding of the business and policy of healthcare and reform initiatives is important to residents. Development of a high-yield, interactive educational curriculum can improve resident knowledge of these areas.

Reflective Critique / Next Steps

For the VCU Neurology Resident Program, specific recommendations made by the PEC included that residents be both pre- and post-tested for understanding of certain areas, in order to more formally track improvement, and for participants to be provided with relevant journal articles and other reading sources to supplement the educational sessions. Additional topics will also be incorporated into the discussions, including:

- *How are residents paid?*
- *Affordable Care Act / Medicaid expansion – the pros & cons*
- *Medical marijuana / Opiate epidemic – what is a doctor to do?*
- *Hands-on medical billing and coding workshop*
- *Rising costs of medications*

A new healthcare policy elective is also being developed for interested residents to provide more in-depth content, including participation in national conferences such as the annual AAN Neurology on the Hill in Washington, D.C.

