

Teaching Students in the Busy Clinic



Tradition

Many practices use the time-honored method of teaching students that consists of:

Student + Patient → Student + Doctor → Student + Doctor + Patient → Follow up discussion

This method has a lot of merits, but can cost time. How can the student receive similar educational value while maintaining a more timely schedule?

During the Actual Visit

There are clearly a variety of ways to conduct a patient visit in a way that is both meaningful to the student and time effective. Here are some possible techniques:

- ✓ Allow the student to choose which patients to see
- ✓ Have the student do the physical exam
- ✓ If the preceptor knows the patient, focus the visit by selecting a topic for the student to talk to the patient about
- ✓ Have the student present treatment options in front of the patient
- ✓ Have the student work up a longer patient while the doctor sees two shorter ones
- ✓ Student observe the doctor carrying out PCC techniques
- * Give student feedback immediately so that he or she can apply it to the next patient

Extension of Visit

By giving students an opportunity to follow up with patients after a visit, the provider is able to catch up in the clinic and the student is able to get more of a perspective on the full care of a patient. Some suggestions for extending the visit:

- ✓ Write a consult letter
- ✓ Put together an information page for the patient
- ✓ Interpret incoming labs
- ✓ Follow up via phone with patient or consulting physician
- * Follow up with patients after being on call or after deliveries

Outside of the standard visit

Students can gain a wealth of knowledge outside of the office. Depending on the clinic's location and accessibility to other providers, a variety of learning experiences can take place away from the primary preceptor:

- ✓ Nursing home rounds
- ✓ Home visits
- ✓ Procedure clinics

- ✓ Triage
- ✓ Front desk check in to learn the procedures of the clinic
- ✓ Entire process of hospital admission with a patient
- ✓ Riding with an EMT
- ✓ Specific other visits – reservation or special clinic
- * Spend time with a lab technician
- * Have students go on home visits early on to familiarize them with population and divide the home visits into half days

Various other time saving devices

There are those times when a clinic has come to fall so far behind that it is simply a matter of catch up. Here are some techniques for those times:

- ✓ Learn about coding – at the end of the day, look at what gets notes for coding
- ✓ Research a problem seen in clinic
- ✓ Explain something (if the preceptor is confident in the student's ability) to the patient about health maintenance
- ✓ Dictate and transcribe a patient the student has seen during the day to learn how a dictation would sound to a transcriptionist
- * Utilize the variety of healthcare providers available (social workers, nurses, public health workers) to give the student a more in-depth understanding of healthcare
- * Rather than seeing patients all day every day, students might benefit from time for focused reading on a topic/disease that they have seen and then present an informal summary of the reading to one of the docs to be followed with discussion

Final Comments

The most successful strategy involves being transparent with the student. “This is stressful for me, I need to get the work done, we need to do something different, but I want it to have some value for you.” Or, “I’m really behind. Will you help me by...” Many students are sensitive to feeling like a burden in the clinic. In addition to feeling the importance of learning what you have to teach, some students have ideas of time-saving strategies, which may further incorporate their interests.

- * Comments from students via the online clerkship evaluation