PCOA as a Predictor of Success on APPEs
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Background
With the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) requirement that schools administer the Pharmacy Curriculum Outcomes Assessment (PCOA) near the end of the didactic curriculum and schools focusing on measuring APPE readiness, there has been increased discussion around the use of the PCOA as a “high stakes” exam and gateway to APPEs. The nature of the PCOA as a standardized test that is focused primarily on demonstration of knowledge has led some to question its utility as an indicator of APPE readiness or predictor of APPE success.

Methods
PCOA percentile scores, Pharmacotherapeutics Course Sequence GPAs, and Pharmacotherapeutics Skills Laboratory GPAs were compared to APPE performance evaluations for three consecutive PharmD classes to determine if a correlation exists between any of the three potential indicators and success on APPEs.

Results
Performance on the PCOA, Skills Lab GPA, and Pharmacotherapeutics GPA were all found to have a positive correlation with overall performance on APPEs. PCOA scores correlated positively with 6 of our 10 subareas while Skills Lab GPA correlated positively with 7. The Pharmacotherapeutics GPA was found to have a positive correlation with 8 of the 10 performance subareas. In all cases of overlap, the relationship between Pharmacotherapeutics GPA and APPE performance was found to be of greater significance.

Implications
While a positive correlation exists between PCOA performance and success in some aspects of APPE rotations, it does not appear to be a comprehensive indicator. Schools should explore various measures of APPE readiness and predictors of success to ensure they are using the strongest indicators and are effectively measuring all critical areas of student performance.