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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Inclusion of Pharmacists to Support Interprofessional Education in Rural Spaces

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TO THE EDITOR:

We greatly appreciate the recently-published article by C. Holly Andrilla, and colleagues.[1] The article focuses on family physician teaching trends for multiple health professions, providing important insight into changes in teaching over time, the differences between physician educators, and the professions being educated. Additionally, they describe the difficulty of finding practice sites and health care teachers in rural spaces, despite the importance and impact of education in the rural setting for learners and their future patients. In their discussion, the authors mentioned interprofessional teaching techniques as a potential option to support physician teaching. This opens an opportunity to consider pharmacists as educators and an asset for learners.

Pharmacists can facilitate the education of training medical professionals by providing a variety of clinical learning opportunities. These opportunities may include health assessments, medication management, counseling, and monitoring.[2] Given these examples, the pharmacist skill set greatly complements those of family physicians and their learners. Pharmacist-led mobile clinics in seven rural Ohio counties invited medical residents to observe and actively participate in the clinical services provided by pharmacists. Alongside pharmacy services, medical residents were able to provide interprofessional counseling to patients and practice physician duties. This demonstrates that clinical opportunities with pharmacists can facilitate diverse educational experiences for medical residents and learners.

It is also helpful for medical learners to understand the role of pharmacists and how collaboration with them can improve patient outcomes.[2,3] After workshops with pharmacists, health care students reported better application of pharmacy-related knowledge to their own profession and patient care.[3]

In one study of clinical pharmacists as educators, 57% of family medicine residency program directors viewed pharmacists as faculty members.[4] In addition to physicians having a positive view of programs with clinical pharmacists, these programs reported having a more organized approach to pharmacotherapy education. Clinical pharmacists were shown to help facilitate education by providing feedback, being preceptors, and expanding the rotation sites available for family medicine residents. Results of the study showed that interprofessional pharmacotherapy learning opportunities were the main advantage of including pharmacists in residency education.

In rural communities, resourcefulness is vital. Pharmacists are a valuable resource and provide interprofessional educational opportunities for medical professional learners, especially in rural spaces.

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