

EFFECTIVE PRECEPTOR SERIES

The Preceptor and the Curriculum

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What Does The Curriculum Have To Do With Precepting?

Do you remember when you were a medical student, meeting your first preceptor? Do you recall wondering what was expected of you? Were the expectations clear or did you have to guess what the preceptor wanted, how you would be evaluated and what the goals were? Many of today's students, and even some preceptors, have these questions and there is an easy way to answer them. The answers are found in the educational curriculum.

What Do We Mean By Curriculum?

The curriculum is a means to an end. Just as a ship captain would not take a vessel out to sea without a destination and a map, students need direction and guidance in order to become competent physicians – ones we would feel confident referring to our own family members.

The curriculum addresses three essential questions about teaching and learning:

1. What knowledge and skills do we want students to have when they finish medical school?
2. What would we accept as evidence that students have attained the desired understanding and proficiencies?
3. What are the best learning strategies or teaching techniques to help students achieve outcome objectives?

The Curriculum Includes:

- Desired outcomes
- Objectives
- Evaluation or assessment techniques
- Content or topic areas
- Learning strategies (teaching techniques)
- Resources

What Are The Desired Outcomes?

Outcomes are the final results of the educational process – targets reflecting the desired impact of teaching and learning. The ship's captain uses navigation devices (similar to a curriculum) to get to the destination (similar to the educational outcome). The

desired outcome for the clerkship is that all students will be able to provide appropriate care to female patients at the end of the clerkship.

Then, What Are Objectives?

Objectives clarify and delineate each outcome. Objectives must be written in behavioral, measurable terms. An example objective for preventive care is, "The student will be able to counsel the patient on contraceptive use." Another more specific objective is "the student conducts a patient history and physical exam in the clinic with 95% accuracy." Note that objectives have measurable action verbs. Each objective must be linked with an evaluation technique. Many clerkship directors have drawn the clerkship objectives from the APGO Medical Student Educational Objectives, which can be viewed at: <https://www.apgo.org/student/apgo-medical-student-educational-objectives.html>. All clinical sites for a clerkship must use the same objectives so it is important to know the clerkship objectives.

What About Evaluation Techniques?

An evaluation technique must be linked with each specific learning objective. If objectives are well written, choosing an evaluation technique is usually fairly straightforward. Evaluation technique examples include observing students demonstrate skills, such as the components of the physical exam or counseling a patient.

Evaluation of student performance should:

1. Involve multiple valid and reliable assessment methods
2. Occur over time
3. Derive from multiple settings or contexts
4. Be specific
5. Be user-friendly for learners and evaluators
6. How do I select the content to teach?
7. Given that there is so much information to cover and so many different objectives, you will need to prioritize the content you will teach. In choosing what to teach for any given session, you will take into account your own strengths, your

learner's needs, and the available clinical content

What Is The Best Teaching-Learning Strategy?

There is no single best teaching technique. How you teach should be based on your comfort level and experience, the nature of the objective and how you plan to evaluate the student. Of course, you might find that some students learn better when you explain things verbally, while others need a more visual approach, such as reading or demonstration. The APGO Medical Student Objectives suggest various teaching methods to teach content. These include: case-based learning, didactic sessions, clinical setting, readings, role play and simulation.

Where Can I Go For Resources?

The APGO Web site (www.apgo.org) is an excellent place for resources. Specifically, it has the latest edition of the APGO Medical Student Educational Objectives. The Objectives are password-protected and accessible through payment of APGO's annual membership dues. Your clerkship director will be able to provide the member department's user name and password for access to this resource. You will also find additional information concerning each objective, such as:

- The level of knowledge expected of a medical student
- How best to evaluate whether the student has mastered the objective
- How this objective fits in with the objectives for ob-gyn residents

A condensed version of these Objectives follows and can be used as a guide to what you should emphasize with the student.

The Educational Objectives Of Ob-Gyn Undergraduate Medical Education¹

1. Develop competence in the medical interview and physical exam of women
2. Apply recommended prevention strategies to women throughout the life-span
3. Recognize his/her role as a leader and

- advocate for women
4. Demonstrate knowledge of preconception care, including genetics and environmental factors
5. Explain the physiologic changes of pregnancy
6. Describe common problems of pregnancy
7. Demonstrate knowledge of intrapartum care
8. Demonstrate knowledge of postpartum care
9. Describe menstrual cycle physiology including puberty and menopause
10. Describe the etiology and evaluation of infertility
11. Develop understanding of contraception including abortion
12. Demonstrate knowledge of common benign gynecologic conditions
13. Formulate a differential diagnosis of acute abdomen and chronic pelvic pain

14. Describe common breast conditions and evaluation of breast complaints
15. Demonstrate knowledge of perioperative care and common gynecologic conditions
16. Describe gynecologic malignancies including risk factors and evaluation
17. Provide preliminary assessment of sexual concerns

Source: 'APGO Medical Student Educational Objectives, 9th Edition, page iii-iv. The Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics (APGO), 2009.

Hopefully, you now have a better understanding of the importance of the curriculum. You are now ready to spend a few minutes with your student at the beginning of each new preceptorship reviewing:

- What are the expected outcomes for the student on this rotation?
- What specific objectives would you and the student like to achieve?
- How will you attempt to achieve these objectives?

- How will you evaluate which goals and objectives have been achieved and which need further work?
- How does the student best learn and what teaching strategies will you use during the preceptorship?

A mid-rotation review of these questions will help both preceptor and student understand what has been achieved and which objectives need emphasis in your remaining time together.

An end-of-clerkship review of what has been accomplished will help the student, and prepare for the likely needs of the next rotation for both student and preceptor.

If you both agree on the curriculum for your time together and periodically map your progress, you will be rewarded with smooth sailing, and a satisfying and successful experience!



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This publication is part of the APGO Effective Preceptor Series – a group of pamphlets intended to educate practitioners and learners about the apprentice system or preceptorship. The quality of learning that occurs in an established relationship between the teacher and the student often meets the challenge of educating physicians in today's chaotic health care environment. It allows doctors in training to practice as much like doctors as good medical practice will allow, and it provides a setting in which some of the best medical education in our nation takes place.

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