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Rehabilitating Soft Skills: Designing a Novel Curriculum for PR&M Residents

Topic: Education (Medical Student, Residency & Post-Graduate)

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BACKGROUND

Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (PR&M) physicians care for patients with complex, often life-altering disabilities, requiring not only clinical expertise but also exceptional soft skills such as communication, empathy, teamwork, and leadership. Despite their critical role in patients' outcomes, soft skills training is often informal or overlooked in residency programs, leaving residents underprepared for the interpersonal and interdisciplinary demands of rehabilitation medicine. To address this gap, we designed a comprehensive, innovative curriculum aimed at equipping PR&M residents with the soft skills necessary to excel in their field. The curriculum emphasizes communication, emotional intelligence, patient-centered care, teamwork, professionalism, time management, leadership, and feedback, ensuring residents are prepared to navigate the complexities of rehabilitation medicine and deliver holistic, patient-centered care.

METHODS

A multidisciplinary team, including PR&M faculty, medical educators, current residents, and patients with chronic disabilities, collaborated to design the curriculum. The process began with comprehensive bibliographic research to identify existing soft skills curricula in medical education and rehabilitation fields, ensuring our design was informed by best practices while addressing gaps specific to PR&M. Focus groups, Delphi method surveys, and iterative feedback sessions were conducted to identify core competencies and teaching methods.

RESULTS

The design process resulted in a longitudinal, adaptable curriculum that integrates simulation-based learning, community immersion, reflective practice, interprofessional workshops, and gamification to create an engaging and practical learning experience. The curriculum emphasizes real-world applicability, with a focus on addressing the unique challenges of PR&M practice, such as managing complex patient interactions and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. By combining innovative teaching methods with a structured approach to soft skills development, the curriculum aims to equip residents with the tools necessary for personal and professional growth in rehabilitation medicine.

CONCLUSION

This innovative soft skills curriculum will soon be implemented in our PR&M residency program, aiming to enhance residents' competence, patient satisfaction, and interdisciplinary collaboration. It could set a new standard for soft skills training in medical education.

Statement of Disclosures

None

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