



MEDICAL EDUCATION
SCHOLARSHIP CENTRE

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Teaching advocacy to junior psychiatry residents

Catherine Hickey, Discipline of Psychiatry

Purpose: Advocacy, while central to the practice of psychiatry for decades, has been inconsistently evaluated in residents. Can a supervisor evaluate if a resident is an effective health advocate? Can advocacy be taught or is it simply an innate quality of the clinician? The purpose of this project was to formalize a method by which residents could engage in patient advocacy, thereby allowing faculty to evaluate them on this important competency. **Methods:** A twelve month pilot project was implemented in a community setting. The first phase was called the “Idea Generation Phase”. Participants were encouraged to think of ideas which would improve the lives of patients. Ideas were written on index cards and presented on a bulletin board. Phase two was called the “Solution Generation Phase”. Participants were asked to review all of the ideas and pick one advocacy idea that was meaningful to them. They were then asked to generate as many solutions to the issue as possible. The third phase was called the “Action Phase”. Participants were asked to commit to a solution and to provide tangible results of this. **Results:** 7 residents participated in the study (n=7). Of these 7, 4 residents participated in the project. The three residents who did not participate in the project cited the following reasons: lack of time, objectives of project not clear and simply forgetting about the project. Of the 4 residents who completed the project, all residents identified unique needs of elderly patients and developed patient information pamphlets intended for distribution in the community. **Conclusions:** Advocacy is an important CanMEDS role. Supervisors often struggle with how to teach it to residents. Evaluation of advocacy also poses challenges. This pilot project developed a formalized method to actively involve residents in advocating for elderly patients. Data is preliminary but promising. The conclusion is that advocacy can potentially be more formally taught and evaluated in junior residents.