Expectations of an Emergency Medicine Clerkship Director

What You Must Know to be Successful

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EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES:
At the end of this session, each attendee will be able to
• Discuss the job description of an EM clerkship director (CD)
• Discuss the essential and desirable qualifications of an EM CD
• Discuss the resources required to run an effective clerkship
• Review the needs of an EM CD relating to career development
By far, the most important aspect of being a successful emergency medicine clerkship director (CD) is having the strong desire and enthusiasm to teach medical students.

“In the hurly-burly of to-day, when the competition is so keen…it is well for young men to remember that no bubble is so iridescent or floats longer than that blown by the successful teacher.”

Sir William Osler
The Pathological Institute of a General Hospital, *Glasgow Med J* 1911;76:321-33

Much of the content of this handout and talk is adopted from a position statement from the Alliance for Clinical Education- Expectations of and for Clerkship Directors: A Collaborative Statement from the Alliance for Clinical Education.

Introduction

Becoming a successful clerkship director (CD) in emergency medicine requires significant time and resources. First and foremost, the individual who assumes the role of clerkship director should have an intrinsic motivation to teach medical students. Without this desire, some may find the job inherently frustrating and even dissatisfying.

**Essential Tasks of an Emergency Medicine Clerkship Director**

- Curricular design and implementation
- Administering the clerkship
- Orientation
- Teaching
  - Lectures, small groups, clinical (bedside), distance learning
- Faculty development
- Evaluation and grading
  - Developing/assessing assessment materials
  - Feedback (LCME requirement)
- Supervision of faculty/resident/student interaction and teaching
- Working with students with difficulties
Professional growth and development

Emergency Medicine Curriculum

Deciding what curriculum to implement or continue implementing for medical students can be a daunting task. How does one decide what lecture topics should be given? What topics should be read during the rotation? What goals and objective should be incorporated into the rotation? How should feedback and evaluation be performed? These are just a few of the questions that clerkship directors will be faced with.

In 2003 a task force was convened by 6 major emergency medicine organizations to develop a standardized curriculum in emergency medicine and help answer many of the preceding questions. This curriculum combines earlier versions into a single uniform curriculum. This version identifies areas of medical student education to help aid medical schools in developing a comprehensive emergency medicine curriculum. It is hoped that this curriculum will be used by emergency medicine rotations across the country.

This curriculum is a great resource for individuals just starting to put together an educational program for medical students.

Know the LCME Requirements!

This is a must for anyone who runs an emergency medicine clerkship or rotation. The Liaison Committee for Medical Education governs and accredits US medical schools, and essentially “makes the rules.” Anyone in the position of a clerkship director should know the pertinent aspects of the LCME guidelines. See www.lcme.org for more details.

Examples:

1. “ED-2: There must be a system with central oversight to assure that the faculty define the types of patients and clinical conditions that students must encounter, the appropriate clinical setting for the educational experience, and the expected level of student responsibility. The faculty must monitor student experience and modify it as necessary to ensure that the objectives of the clinical education program will be met.”
Thus, clerkship directors must spell out how many chest pain cases a student should be exposed to as a minimum and have a system to provide educational supplementation should the student fall short of that expectation.

2. “ED-24: Residents who supervise or teach medical students, as well as graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in the biomedical sciences who serve as teachers or teaching assistants, must be familiar with the educational objectives of the course or clerkship and be prepared for their roles in teaching an evaluation.”

It is the responsibility of the emergency medicine CD to supervise the teaching relationship between residents and medical students. The CD serves as the chief liaison between residents/faculty and medical students.

**Career Path as a Clerkship Director**

Becoming a successful medical educator and clerkship director has now become a viable career path in academic emergency medicine. In prior years, many physicians were “chosen” to be the CD based on the need of the department. They served in this role without career plans that involved progressive growth as an educator. Many authorities on this subject believe the most successful CD should have a strong desire to teach medical students and have as their life-long goal the education of students.

**Protected Time as a Clerkship Director**

Lack of protected time is a common complaint in academic settings. In many institutions, the emergency medicine CD does not have adequate protected time to run the clerkship. These CDs are expected to work a normal clinical load as well as perform all of the vital functions of a director. It is now firmly believed that an emergency medicine clerkship director should have enough protected time to perform the essential duties of leading and administering a rotation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The three principal activities of a clerkship director</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Administering the clerkship</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Conducting educational research or other scholarly activity</td>
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“Studies by several clerkship director organizations have concluded that 25% should be considered a minimum estimate of time for the administrative aspects of running a clerkship. A minimum of 50% of a full-time equivalent has been recognized as appropriate and should be allocated for a CD position.”

Pangaro et al. Alliance for Clinical Education 2003
Warning: Clerkship directors should sit down with their Chairman and negotiate for enough time and monetary support to run the emergency medicine clerkship.

**Objective 1-Review the job description and administrative duties of an emergency medicine clerkship director**

Becoming a successful clerkship director who can maintain academic longevity starts by understanding the job description and administrative duties involved. Lecturing and clinical supervision are only a fraction of the work involved. The following detail what a clerkship director actually does.

- Establishment of the clinical experience.
  - The CD “sets the tone” for the educational experience of students
- Development/maintenance of core educational goals and objectives
  - Detailed goals and objectives need to be developed and maintained
- The clinical schedule
  - This will vary from program to program
  - Numbers of shifts worked by students will also vary
- Production of educational materials
  - Didactics
  - Labs
  - Reading
  - Simulation labs
- Assessment of students (clinical evaluation, examinations, etc.)
- Final grades with narrative
- Plans for remediation for students in need
- Letter writing and mentoring of students
  - Clerkship directors (by their title alone) are recognized as frequent letter writers.
- Familiarity with the LCME requirements
- Coordination of student teaching
  - Residents
  - Faculty
- Role as participant in school-wide education committees and clerkship professional policies (sick policy, absence policy, etc.)

**Objective 2-Review the essential and desirable qualifications of an emergency medicine clerkship director**

There are many qualifications that a CD must have in order to be successful in the role. Skillful mastery of this job involves much more than the desire to teach. The following qualifications have been developed by the Alliance for Clinical Education:
Essential Qualifications for a Clerkship Director

- Be able to provide overall vision for the clerkship
  - The clerkship director must maintain this vision and always look for ways to improve the rotation.
- Clinical experience and board-certified in emergency medicine
- Have a working knowledge of national, school-wide, and department-specific curricular goals for students
- Have experience with clinical supervision and classroom instruction of medical students
- Have skill in formative evaluation and feedback for individual students
- Be able to advise and supervise remediation for students with academic problems
- Be enthusiastic about students and regard undergraduate medical student education as a central focus of career development
- Be able to provide career guidance to medical students
- Be able to handle a clerkship site, including schedules for students, support personnel, education budget, and office space

Desirable Qualifications for a Clerkship Director

- Have prior relevant experience, such as assistant director of medical student education
- Have demonstrated excellence in teaching
- Have the necessary skills to work with the Dean’s office and other departments
- Be able to motivate colleagues to teach and to recruit new faculty into teaching roles
- Have the professional skills to provide feedback to teachers and provide faculty development in teaching for residents and junior faculty.
- Demonstrate interest and knowledge in educational theory and research methods

Objective 3-Review the resources required to run an effective clerkship, including medical school, departmental, and administrative support.

A tremendous amount of resources are required to run a great emergency medicine clerkship. Adequate administrative, departmental, and medical school support must be in place in order to run an effective clerkship.

Description

- Control over educational resources and a defined budget for personnel, materials, and travel sufficient to meet the educational requirements of the clerkship and the professional development of the clerkship director.
• An assistant to be “first contact” liaison with students. This person may be the secretarial support for the administration of the clerkship.
  o This is an absolute must!
  o This person should be good with students and should be available for all questions and be able to relay messages. A full-time position is desired.
  o Clerical duties include:
    ▪ Making schedules
    ▪ Reserving classrooms and obtaining audiovisual and other equipment
    ▪ Ordering supplies
    ▪ Preparing, copying, and distributing written materials
    ▪ Collecting end-of clerkship paper work, exams, etc.
    ▪ Communicating with the Dean’s office
• Sufficient material resources (telephones, computers, copiers, fax machines) to support clerkship needs
• Access to new technologies (hardware and software)
• Sufficient dedicated time for clerkship administration including:
  o Orientation for students
  o Evaluation of students
  o Preparation of grades
  o Managing the curriculum
  o Orienting teachers
  o Mentoring and counseling students about career choice
  o Writing letters of recommendation

Objective 4-Review the needs of the emergency medicine clerkship director relating to career development and time allocation to fulfill his/her responsibilities.

Emergency Medicine faculty in the role of clerkship director must have adequate protected time to develop their careers as educators. Many clerkship directors plan on remaining in their roles for the rest of their career and can be promoted to professor in many schools. The bottom line is this: Emergency Medicine CD is a career path and is NOT a means to an end!

General tips for the emergency medicine CD:
• Get involved in local and national education committees that pertain to medical student education. A perfect example of this is the newly formed Clerkship Directors in Emergency Medicine (CDEM). Visibility within these organizations may allow for exposure of your teaching, curricular development, and educational administration efforts. In addition, involvement in these organizations often leads to great opportunities for career advancement.
• Publish on education. This cannot be overstated.
• Get education grants.
• Attend as many workshops and conferences pertaining to medical education and teaching skills as you can. This type of activity, which will clearly require financial support, should be endorsed and supported by your department. Examples include but are not limited to:
  o CORD Academic Assembly has a medical student educators track
  o ACEP Teaching Fellowship
  o AAMC
• Participate in as many faculty development workshops as possible.
• Discuss your short and long-term plans with your Chairman and be sure to discuss what workshops and courses you feel that you need to attend. Again, financial support will be required.
• Determine how your productivity as a clerkship director will affect your qualification for promotion and tenure.

References


