

Emergency Medicine as a Core Clerkship

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Background

Although Emergency Medicine is still a relatively new specialty, it is now required in more than half of medical schools. If your school does not have Emergency Medicine as a core clerkship, it might be time to consider advocating for this. When advocating for Emergency Medicine as a core clerkship, it is important to demonstrate the advantages of this to your department and your school.

Department of Emergency Medicine

For your department, a required rotation provides students with exposure to the ED that they might not have otherwise experienced. This can increase collegiality as these students graduate and become our consultants, and it can be an excellent recruiting tool. Additionally, having Emergency Medicine as a required clerkship establishes our specialty as core to being a competent physician and makes the case that this rotation is of similar status to other core clerkships, such as medicine, surgery, and pediatrics.

School of Medicine

The school of medicine will likely have other concerns and require other persuasive arguments. First, Emergency Medicine is now required at more than half of medical schools, and this number is growing. More importantly, Emergency Medicine is the best place to learn how to meet the standards of EPA (Entrustable Professional Activity) #10: Recognize a patient requiring urgent or emergent care and initiate evaluation and management.

Challenges

As with any new initiative, creating a core clerkship will have challenges. Institutional bias against Emergency Medicine and finding a space within an existing M3 schedule may be encountered. For both of these, creating good relationships with other departments, establishing a history of excellent academic work, and taking advantage of existing opportunities, especially in satellite facilities, can help overcome these.

Lessons Learned

After our first year, we learned many lessons – some of the most important ones include:

- Not every student will be interested/good at faking interest – we had far more problems in the past year than any year before with students missing shifts, appearing disinterested, and failing to prepare. Set clear expectations and be prepared for some creative ways for students to avoid work!
- Students will be surprised – We have 12 students planning to apply in Emergency Medicine this year – the most we have ever had. Several have stated they were only exposed to Emergency Medicine because of the required clerkship.
- More students = more work – although this seems obvious, the increase in workload from an elective to a required clerkship is more than we expected. Advocate for yourself, your team, and your time.

- Most importantly, no one can do this alone! Find a great partner and build a team within your school and your department, and you will be prepared to handle anything that comes next!