

Dealing with Challenging Learners

Amy R. Barger Stevens, MD
12/19/18

Objectives

- Discuss various presentations of challenging learners
- Reflect the limitations to “best practice” management strategies
- Develop a framework by which the management of challenging learners can be constructed

"Best Practice"

- Does not really exist
 - For approach to the challenging learner
 - For remediation in medical education at all levels
- Recommend multi-institutional, outcomes-based research on remediation strategies accompanied by long-term follow-up

Hauer et al, Academic Medicine, 2009

"Best Practice"

- Existent literature does recommend:
 - Multiple assessment tools to assess deficiencies
 - Individualized instruction
 - Deliberate practice followed by feedback/self-reflection
 - Reassessment

Hauer et al, Academic Medicine, 2009

SOAP Format

- Subjective
- Objective
- Assessment
- Plan

SOAP Format

- Subjective – what do you/others think and say?
- Objective – What are the specific behaviors that are observed?
- Assessment – Your differential diagnosis of the problem
- Plan – Gather more data? Intervene? Get help?

Langlois et al, Fam Med, 5/2000

Subjective

- Learner is labeled –
 - Obtain data from all sources
 - Does a pattern exist?
 - Symptom of underlying condition?

Langlois et al, Fam Med, 5/2000

Objective

- Pattern of behavior identified
 - Document specific instances of behavior

Langlois et al, Fam Med, 5/2000

Assessment – Differential Diagnosis

- Cognitive
- Affective
- Valuative
- Environment
- Medical

Langlois et al, Fam Med, 5/2000

Differential

- Cognitive
 - Knowledge base/clinical skills
 - Dyslexia
 - Spatial perception difficulties
 - Communication difficulties
 - Lack of effort/interest

Langlois et al, Fam Med, 5/2000

Differential

- Affective
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Anger
 - Fear

Langlois et al, Fam Med, 5/2000

Differential

- Valuative
 - Expects a certain level of work
 - Expects a certain grade
 - Does not value the rotation
 - Does not want to be at your site
 - Does not value your teaching
 - Has principles that conflict with yours or patients'

Langlois et al, Fam Med, 5/2000

Differential

- Environment
 - Hospital-care oriented
 - Not used to undifferentiated patient
 - Not time sensitive
 - Not patient-satisfaction oriented

Langlois et al, Fam Med, 5/2000

Differential

- Medical
 - Clinical depression
 - Anxiety/panic disorder
 - Recovering from recent illness
 - Hypothyroidism
 - Preexisting illness in poor control
 - Psychosis
 - Substance abuse

Langlois et al, Fam Med, 5/2000

Plan

- Gather more data – observe/record behavior-specific data
- Discuss with learner
- Intervene – detailed, specific feedback
 - Set time to reassess
- Get help, if needed
- Consider preceptor issues
- DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT

Langlois et al, Fam Med, 5/2000

Prevention

- Communicate expectations, both yours and theirs
- Formal mid-cycle review to reassess and refine goals and expectations
- Early detection is key
- Only pass if earned

Langlois et al, Fam Med, 4/2000

Legal Implications

- Learner should be made aware of problem; opportunity for remediation should be considered, not mandated
- Courts do not intervene provided:
 - professional judgement is used
 - entire performance record is reviewed
 - no evidence of arbitrary or capricious actions by faculty/institution
- Follow due process
- **DOCUMENT**

Hicks et al, AJOG, 2005

Objectives

- Discuss various presentations of challenging learners
- Reflect the limitations to “best practice” management strategies
- Develop a framework by which the management of challenging learners can be constructed

References

- Grams GD et al. The Faculty Experience with the "Troublesome" Family Practice Resident. *Fam Med* 1992; 24:197-200.
- Hauer KE et al. Remediation of the Deficiencies of Physicians across the Continuum from Medical School to Practice: a Thematic Review of the Literature. *Academic Medicine*. 2009; 84(12): 1822-32.
- Hicks PJ et al. To the Point: Medical Education Reviews-Dealing with Student Difficulties in the Clinical Setting. *Am J Obs Gynecol*. 2005; 193: 1915-22.
- Langlois JP and Thach S. Managing the Difficult Learning Situation. *Fam Med*. 2000; 32(5): 307-9.
- Langlois JP and Thach S. Preventing the Difficult Learning Situation. *Fam Med*. 2000; 32(4): 232-4.