

PAHS rural clerkship: Evaluating a unique model for medical education in Nepal (work in-progress)

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Context:

The Patan Academy of Health Sciences (PAHS) has a mission to produce rural healthcare personnel motivated to serve the underserved in Nepal, where the doctor-patient ratio is 1:150,000. Therefore, PAHS has created a five-months rural clerkship in the final year of its Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) curriculum. During this posting, students learn academic and life skills which undergoes 360-degree evaluation. Since inception, PAHS has received input from international experts, including Memorial University, which has great experience in rural medical education. This presentation will review some survey results and preliminary themes, including how the program adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objective:

To identify opportunities to strengthen this program and determine if it provides sufficient value to justify funding.

Design:

Formative (process) and summative (outcome) program evaluation, guided by a logic model and evaluation framework. Data sources include qualitative interviews, surveys and trip reports.

Participants:

Interviews: 40 PAHS executives, faculty, staff, rural preceptors, graduates, and students.

Surveys: 65 community members, 129 patients, and 100 hospital staff (at district sites). Trip

reports: 15 visiting Canadian family physicians, faculty and residents.

Results:

Students and faculty feel the rural clerkship provides them with the experience they need to be effective rural practitioners as they learn not only clinical skills but also essential rural life skills. Commitment levels to future rural practice varied. Logistical challenges include housing and internet connectivity. 60% of community members, 57% of patients, and 85% of hospital staff felt that having medical students provide service improved or very much improved patient care. During the COVID-19 pandemic, PAHS could not send one batch of students to the district sites, due to public health restrictions. However, the next batch of students successfully lobbied to be sent to the district sites as they valued the richer learning experiences that were possible in

district hospitals. PAHS has added infection control training into the curriculum for student safety.

Conclusions:

PAHS rural clerkship prepares students for rural practice. The COVID-19 pandemic prevented only one cohort from participating.