

Standardized Patient Perceptions of Student Pharmacist Communication Skills

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Background:

The development and mastery of communication skills are crucial for pharmacy students, to optimize therapeutic outcomes and ultimately improve patient care. The importance of developing these skills is recognized by the Accreditation Council on Pharmacy Education (ACPE). Standardized patients (SP) as defined by the Southern Illinois University (SIU) School of Medicine are people coached to portray an actual physical and emotional state of actual patients at a particular moment in their illness ⁽¹⁾. Schools of pharmacy include SPs in skills assessment to help practice their approach to care and to have the closest encounter with real life patients.

Evidence on SPs utilizing assessment tools is limited. A majority of medical schools depend on SP to improve student skills ⁽²⁾. At SIUE SOP, the SPs do not currently play any role in assessing the student performance; it is the faculty or course coordinators that provide student evaluation. We recognize that if SPs are serving as the patients, their opinion and feedback is also important to determine what grade the students deserve.

Objective:

The study aimed to look at SP perception of student communication skills by using the global communication rubric (GC) and how they compare to performance scores.

Methods:

This was an observational study which assessed how standardized patients (SPs) evaluated student communication skills and provided appropriate feedback via a survey. The survey was administered to each SP after each simulated student-patient encounter within the SIUE School of Pharmacy Curriculum. These encounters took place in the Skills Lab courses during performance-based assessments (PBAs).

Results:

A total of 113 survey responses were received from two PBAs in the fall semester (P2). All responses were assessed in this study. Table 1 shows the overall results of the GC rubric completed by the SPs on all students. Out of the 113 responses, 54.8% of responses were from Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) students with first time experience, 9.7% of responses from SOP faculty, and 35.4% of responses from community volunteers with more experience acting as patients.

Conclusion:

We recommended that SIUE SOP create a structural SP program where volunteers would undergo training specific to different patient encounters. Further assessment should be done to assess the perceptions of SPs in students' communication skills using the GC rubric that

professors use to grade students, and ultimately rely on SPs responses for students' grade for the patient encounter.

References:

1. *Standardized Patient Program*. SIU School of Medicine. <https://www.siumed.edu/oec/sp>. Accessed 9 July 2021.
2. Kimberlin, Carole L. "Communicating with Patients: Skills Assessment in US Colleges of Pharmacy." *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, vol. 70, no. 3, Sept. 2006, p. 67. DOI.org (Crossref), doi:10.5688/aj700367.