

Professionalism and Self-Reflective Learning

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Purpose

Self-reflection is part of developing professionalism. An online forum was created **to facilitate self-reflection and sharing during the 9-month rural elective.**



Background

The Rural Physician Associate Program (RPAP) places third year medical students in a rural Minnesota community with a primary care preceptor(s) for 9 months. As the only student in the community, opportunities for sharing with other students and RPAP faculty are essential. Students receive six visits from RPAP faculty and are brought together in small regional groups at least five times during the elective.

Methods

RPAP students complete six online modules that foster discussion on rural and health care issues. They are also encouraged to post their “interesting stories” on the discussion board accessible to RPAP faculty and students. Students and faculty respond to these postings. Faculty members respond with the goal of support and mentoring.

Students whose stories have a universal theme are invited to “write up” their stories. This process involves sharing drafts of the story and getting feedback from faculty that deepens the student’s self-reflection and learning from the experience.

The products are shared in the following public formats:

- RPAP orientation—several students read portions of the piece aloud and the piece’s author and faculty facilitate discussions about the themes.
- Creative or reflective sections of medical journals and case reports. (11 publications to date)
- Selections in an anthology: *The Country Doctor Revisited: A Reader of 21st Century Rural Health Care* (Kent State University Press, 2010)
- Posts on a university wide web site (development in process)

Conclusions

Encouraging this shared self-reflection results in:

- Deeper processing of and reflection on important events in professional development
- Opportunity to teach peers and model self-reflection
- A forum for the discussion of important ethical, emotional and policy issues
- Practicing written communication skills for personal and professional development
- Fun and pride of seeing your name in print and building a track record of publications