Title: Improving the Reflective Learning Experience of Medical Students using Appreciative Inquiry

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Needs and Objectives

Reflective learning is a standard instructional methodology in many medical schools. At Johns Hopkins, reflective learning has been part of the longitudinal ambulatory clerkship (LAC) curriculum for first and second year medical students since 2009. Students write 10 reflections per year and upload them to an online learning portfolio. On evaluations, students consistently rank the written reflections poorly compared to other LAC learning activities.

Setting and Participants

An alternative model of reflection was offered in December 2013. This model provided two major changes from the existing curriculum: (1) Reflections were written and shared during small group activity so that students could receive feedback from others (previously, less than 5% of written reflections were reviewed); (2) Reflections were based on the principles of "Appreciative Inquiry" (AI), which asks participants to identify and affirm strengths rather than weaknesses.

Description

All members of the class of 2016 (n=116) were invited to participate in the AI pilot; 55 participated. 10 faculty were recruited from a group who had attended an AI faculty development session. Students were excused from 3 written reflections if they attended the AI session. During AI sessions, participants worked in groups of 4-5 students with a facilitator. Each group spent 90 minutes in the AI exercise: 10 minutes for orientation; 20 minutes for writing reflections; 50 minutes for reading narratives aloud and discussion; 10 minutes for closing remarks. Course administrators and a student representative scheduled the sessions and created a one-page instruction sheet to guide the exercise.

Evaluation

This pilot was evaluated using an 8-question survey completed by 43 of 56 participating students and 4 of 8 participating faculty. 100% of student respondents found the AI group experience to be "significantly more valuable" than the existing process; 88% indicated the time commitment was "less" or "the same". Faculty indicated the AI model proved flexible and highly satisfying.

Lessons Learned

Reflective learning provides potential to process complex learning themes and experiences. However evaluations suggested this was not a valued learning strategy in our LAC. Our AI pilot was well attended and its self-selected participants rated the

experience very positively.   Because of this, and in view of modest resource requirements, the AI pilot has been expanded to the class of 2017.