Purpose. This study investigated whether regional medical campus students and faculty perceived an association between students’ M1 and M2 Scholarship, Enrichment, and Remediation (SER) Week enrichment activities and demonstration of Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs) during those students’ M3 rotations.

Background. An integrated curriculum incorporates clinical concepts into the traditionally basic science first two years of undergraduate medical education (UME).1 An integrated curriculum “improves connections between these disciplines and enhances graduates’ recreation of knowledge and development of clinical skills.”2

Early attempts to integrate basic science education with clinical medicine prompted medical schools to move to organ-systems based modules for delivery of basic science content, teaching pathophysiology, anatomy, histology, and pharmacology related to a single organ system within one unit.2 Later emphasis on “vertical integration” included the use of problem-based learning, where basic science principles are explored via a presented clinical case.3

Study Design

We conducted a qualitative interview study utilizing mixed methods in analysis. With students, we aimed to understand their perception of the value of SER enrichment weeks taken during their M1 and M2 years relative to EPAs. With faculty, we aimed to understand what EPAs they observed in those same students during M3 rotations.

Our interview guide consisted of 9 domains that the study team collaboratively created based on the 13 EPAs. 4 domains were introductory and concluding portions of the guide (tell us about your experiences, is there value in SERs, do you have comments, and what are your future plans). We grouped the 13 EPAs into 5 skill areas, which comprised our remaining domains: diagnostic, treatment, care processes, critical thinking and communication, and professionalism skills.

All M3 students were eligible to participate (academic year not disclosed to protect confidentiality), as were their clinical faculty. We solicited participation via email, and one student team member scheduled and conducted the interviews. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Interviews were coded to an a priori codebook consisting of our interview guide domains and the more specific EPAs in each domain. We compared student and faculty data to assess similarities and differences in their perceptions and evaluate the potential association of SER weeks with EPAs.

Results

We interviewed 8 third-year medical students on the Salina campus, 100% of that year’s class. We then interviewed 6 clinical faculty who teach in third-year clerkships. Our qualitative analysis of interview transcripts yielded data in all 5 EPA domains. We conducted a content analysis of each domain and skill to understand whether students saw skills present in the SER experiences and whether faculty saw skills present in M3 students during clerkships.

If the majority of students stated they gained experience with a given skill during their SER experiences, the “SER Association” in the table below was rated “Likely.” If mixed, “Unclear,” and when the majority indicated that skill was not experienced during SER, “Unlikely.” In only two instances did students indicate positive exposure to skills that were not observed by faculty. The SER Association for those skills was designated “SER+.” If the majority of faculty with data relevant to a given skill stated students were performing as expected or better, we categorized that skill as “Yes” under “Faculty See” in the table below. If responses were mixed, we rated that skill “Variable,” and only if faculty unanimously said they did not have meaningful opportunities to observe that skill in their clerkship did we rate the skill “N/A.” As shown in the table, the SER Association was likely in diagnostic tests, safety, and interprofessional teamwork.

Discussion

Discussion. Consistent with the goals of the ACE curriculum, many SER weeks strive to integrate clinical content into the basic science years of the KU SOM experience. Students found SERs valuable, particularly for diagnostic tests, safety, and collaborating with an interprofessional team, and that value was reflected in faculty recognition of those skills. Faculty see most EPAs present—even at varying stages of development—in third-year students, and SERs are only one small piece of students’ educational experience.

Limitations. This study is limited by the small sample size and by selection bias among participating faculty. This may have influenced our results.

Future Directions. This study provides a potential direction for future quality improvement efforts within the ACE curriculum, as we strive to ensure they provide valuable educational experiences that help students progress in EPAs.

Conclusion. SER enrichment experiences offered in Salina added to student development of several EPAs and overall added value to their educational experiences. Educators should continue to look for ways to ensure enrichment weeks add to student EPA development.

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