LETTERS

CAPE Educational Outcomes: A Student's Perspective

To the Editor. In doctor of pharmacy (PharmD) programs across the nation, senior students are nearing the pinnacle of their pharmacy education and their graduation is close at hand. The goal of colleges and schools of pharmacy and pharmacy students alike is to graduate a knowledgeable, well-rounded pharmacist ready to step into practice. Across programs, this goal has been defined in educational outcomes. Whether captured in a few broad sentences or a list of a hundred specific items, all outcomes seek to define the skills that a pharmacist graduating from a PharmD program will possess. Recently, the Center for the Advancement of Pharmacy Education (CAPE) released their recommended educational outcomes for PharmD programs. As a senior pharmacy student, these outcomes have inspired reflection on the goals of pharmacy education. They represent what is needed to be an entry-level pharmacist and, as such, I have pondered their meaning in the terms of my own educational goals and achievements. At first some of the outcomes were surprising, but after reflecting on the future practice of our profession, these outcomes describe an excellent entry-level pharmacist, and their acceptance will be beneficial for the future of schools and students alike.

The CAPE recommendations divide outcomes into 4 broad categories: foundational knowledge, providing patient care, approaches toward patient care, and personal and professional growth. There are 15 subcategories describing what is included in each outcome. The CAPE preamble describes new outcomes in the affective domain. Beyond knowledge and skill, these new outcomes seek to define the more intangible qualities necessary to practice pharmacy. At first glance, these outcomes may seem surprising. Becoming an innovator, an entrepreneur, or an advocate may not have been on the minds of new pharmacy students. Professional growth must surely be an outcome of our education, but personal growth seems to be rather *personal* to be a formal outcome of our training. While the inclusion of these new affective outcomes is sure to spark debate among pharmacy educators, I believe they depict what will be necessary to be successful in the practice of pharmacy.

For example, consider the emergent models of patient-centered care and medication-therapy management.

Successfully practicing within these models requires more of pharmacists than the possession of drug facts or the skills to manipulate pharmaceuticals, and the affective domain outcomes seek to define these abilities. Students must become educators, advocates, and innovators in the world of medicine. The knowledge of an interaction is useless without the ability to convince a prescriber to make a change and educate a patient about the problem and solution. Improvement in patient outcomes is enhanced when we are willing to advocate for our patients' success, and the challenges inherent to our healthcare system will not be overcome without innovative new solutions. My student colleagues desire to practice as an integrated part of a healthcare team and the CAPE document offers outcomes that meet these goals.

Sharing a program's formal outcomes should be part of a pharmacy student's education. Few of my classmates are aware of the existence of our program's outcomes. In traditional learning, both faculty members and students focus on course-specific learning objectives. During this stage, the outcome of acquiring foundational knowledge can easily be tied to, and assessed by, the course learning objectives. However, during experiential learning, including simulated patient-care situations in laboratory, and introductory and advanced pharmacy practice experiences, a student's understanding of the ultimate desired outcome of their experiences may help to provide a deeper level of meaning. The final semester before clinical practice experiences is an optimal time to reinforce a program's outcomes and emphasize their importance for the future of pharmacy.

The new CAPE outcomes reflect the attitudes and attributes needed for graduates to be successful pharmacists. I would encourage programs that have not already done so to incorporate these outcomes into their curriculum. I would encourage students to reflect on how these outcomes match our professional goals. A student who has achieved the 2013 CAPE educational outcomes will be well prepared to enter into any area of pharmacy practice. They will be learners, caregivers, promoters, advocates, and providers. They will be managers, problem solvers, educators, and collaborators. They will be self-aware pharmacists who innovate and lead. They will be the future of the profession of pharmacy.

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