SERVICE LEARNING

Service-Learning in Pharmacy Education

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Keywords: service learning

Service-learning (SL) is not new to pharmacy education, but growing numbers of educators are exploring or practicing this pedagogy. This supplemental issue focuses on SL, with articles addressing many of its aspects.

The current interest in and practice of SL in pharmacy education builds on the earlier work of the pioneers in our discipline, such as that of the late Robert Chalmers of Purdue University, and Nancy Nickman of the University of Utah. In recent years, several pharmacy educators have written about SL in this journal and elsewhere. In 1997, Murawski et al surveyed schools of pharmacy and described the state of SL in pharmacy education in this Journal.1 Many educators have given presentations, workshops, and posters on SL at recent AACP annual meetings.

These educators do not work in isolation. Various national organizations support SL in higher education, notably Campus Compact (with national, state, and regional groups) and Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH; with national and regional groups). The mission of Campus Compact is to support campus-based public and community service.2 CCPH actively fosters SL among health professions educators, sponsoring conferences and training institutes, and bringing together discipline-specific groups of educators interested in SL.3

With the assistance of CCPH, pharmacy educators interested in SL have undertaken several projects in recent years: organizing SL workshops at the 2001, 2003, and upcoming 2004 AACP annual meetings, and working with the Editor of this Journal to create this supplemental issue and to assemble the articles presented herein.

The articles in this issue address a variety of aspects of SL. The first 3 comprise an introduction and overview, addressing 3 questions: How does one design a SL course? What is the current state of implementing SL in pharmacy education? What do students learn through SL? The remaining articles describe 3 specific examples of SL courses.

In the first part of the issue, Nemire et al present practical guidelines for designing a SL course that would be especially useful for anyone considering establishing such a course. Then, Peters et al present the results of their surveys of United States colleges of pharmacy with regard to their introductory practice and SL programs, updating the earlier work of Murawski et al.1 Finally, Kearney assesses the educational outcomes of a SL program, providing data useful for the evaluation of this pedagogy.

In the second part of this issue, articles describe 2 unique SL courses and one example of cross-curricular integration of SL. Schumann et al describe a unique SL course taught by pharmacy and social work educators, focusing on the critical connection between service and reflection. Lamsam et al. describe the cross-curricular integration of SL, following up previous articles about the programs at the University of Pittsburgh. Finally, Jarvis et al describe a unique SL-based nutrition course in a pharmacy curriculum.

Our intention is that this collection of articles will give a sense of what is currently being practiced in the way of SL in pharmacy curricula. The programs described here are a few of the many currently in existence. We hope this will encourage other educators to enter the dialog, in print, at meetings, etc, about this pedagogy, describing and assessing existing programs and/or considering new programs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank CCPH for sponsoring the collaboration from which the idea of, and the interest in, this supplemental issue sprang; and Dr. Joseph DiPiro and the Board Members of this Journal who welcomed, encouraged, and supported the efforts that led to this issue.

REFERENCES