VIEWPOINTS

The Scholarship of Teaching

Joseph T. DiPiro, PharmD

Editor, The American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education
College of Pharmacy, The University of Georgia

Most faculty members will recognize the title of this Viewpoint from the 1990 book by Ernest L. Boyer, Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate. Teaching has always been the primary mission of colleges and schools of pharmacy and scholarship is critical for pharmacy education to advance and address the pressing issues of today.

“Scholarship is defined as the creation, discovery, advancement, or transformation of knowledge. The fruits of such efforts are evidenced only when that knowledge is assessed for quality by peer review and made public. Thus, the defining elements of scholarship are originality, creativity, peer review and communication.”

From Developing and Sustaining a Culture of Scholarship. RH Kennedy, et al

As Boyer states, “The work of the professor becomes consequential only as it is understood by others.”

A high percentage of our faculty members in pharmacy education are primarily committed to teaching. The change to the PharmD as the sole first professional degree, and the application of new teaching approaches (such as introductory practice experiences, problem-based learning and service-learning) has provided opportunities to express scholarship in teaching. However, pharmacy faculty members who devote their creative energies to instruction are sometimes discouraged when they are told that their efforts do not meet the traditional expectations for scholarship within their institutions. Their accomplishments in teaching do not fit the time-honored but limited definition of scholarly research.

In research, the path for scholarship has been clearly laid out. To be considered a research scholar, one cannot just conduct valid observations or experiments. The research should be based on a clear rationale and sound objectives, the methods should be state-of-the-art, appropriate data analysis and statistical tests should be performed, valid conclusions should be drawn from the data or evidence, and the work should undergo the scrutiny of peers through presentation and publication.

The scholarship of teaching must be recognized as a legitimate path to attain success in academia. As stated by Kennedy and associates, “the scholarship of teaching lies not in effective delivery of appropriate content but more in the development of creative and original means for delivery and measuring of outcomes.” For many years, the Journal has been an outlet for scholarship of teaching. However, we have not had a standard set of criteria to clearly document the uniqueness of contributions or the outcomes achieved in a way that demonstrates the scholarship of teaching.

In this issue, an AACP Task Force, chaired by Therese Poirier, reports recommendations and guidelines for manuscripts that describe instructional design and assessment. They outline the essential elements of a manuscript to document scholarship of teaching. The IDEAS format they propose is similar to the format that is well accepted for manuscripts documenting the scholarship of research. Along with a well-constructed rationale, a manuscript describing an instructional innovation should provide details of the design (analogous to the methods section of a research paper) and assessment of outcomes (analogous to the results section of a research paper). Conclusions about the value of a course should be based on evidence as documented in the paper. A full description of an instruction component allows others to see the plan, implementation, and assessment, facilitating application at other institutions. The Task Force has provided a clear set of guidelines that describes how creative scholarship in instruction should be documented through publication.

Teachers should use these guidelines as they create a new course and to plan course assessments that will facilitate manuscript writing after a course has been offered. As Boyer states, “Great teachers create a common ground of intellectual commitment.” Manuscript reviewers should also use the guidelines as a standard to judge manuscripts that describe innovations in instruction. The use of these guidelines should improve the quality of our scholarship and the quality of manuscripts that are published in the Journal.

Corresponding Author: Joseph T. DiPiro, PharmD.
Address: College of Pharmacy-UGA, CJ-1020, Medical College of Georgia, Augusta, GA 30912. Tel: 706-721-4915. Fax: 706-721-3994. E-mail: jdipiro@mail.mcg.edu.
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