

[S18.002] The Relationship of Medical Student Patient Encounter Logs and Clinical and Exam Performance in a Neurology Clerkship

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OBJECTIVE: To determine whether educational outcomes correlate with how many patients students see (and/or their diagnoses). **BACKGROUND:** With the recent emphasis on core competencies, medical schools and residency programs have attempted to monitor and regulate trainees' patient encounters. The educational validity of this practice is unknown. **DESIGN/METHODS:** We reviewed patient logs maintained by students during the neurology clerkship in the 2005-2006 academic year, and determined the number of patients each student saw in 5 diagnostic categories (seizure, headache, stroke, acute mental status change, and dementia). We compared these numbers with the students' written exam scores (total and category-specific) and clinical evaluation scores using Pearson product-moment correlations. **RESULTS:** 212 students were analyzed. For each student, there were 5 data points (one for each diagnostic category), yielding 1060 data points in all: for each data point, the x-coordinate represented the number of patients the student saw in that category, and the y-coordinate represented the student's exam sub-score for that diagnostic category. The resulting correlation coefficient was -0.066 ($p = 0.03$). In separate analyses, the total number of patients seen by each student did not correlate significantly with the student's total exam score ($r = -0.021$, $p = 0.77$) or the student's overall clinical performance rating ($r = 0.089$, $p = 0.23$). **CONCLUSIONS/RELEVANCE:** The more patients that students saw in a given diagnostic category, the lower their exam sub-score was in that category. The total number of patients that students saw did not correlate with their performance on the exam, or the evaluation of their clinical performance by faculty and housestaff. Thus, patient census may not be a meaningful index of educational outcome. Considerable time, money, and effort are required to maintain an accurate log of trainees' encounters with patients; based on the current study, this may not be an effective use of resources.