Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine

CQI CHRONICLE

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Factors to Consider when Updating Course Curriculum

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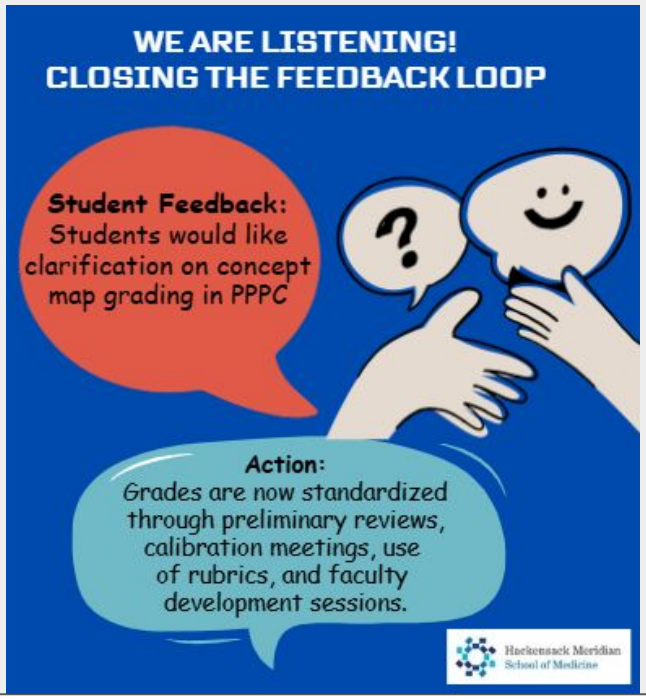
The first Phase 1 course our medical students take is "Molecular and Cellular Principles" (aka MCP). This course provides the foundational knowledge necessary for subsequent courses in Phase 1 that delve into organ systems and disease mechanisms. The organization and content of MCP was originally designed by Jennifer Zepf, D.O. in 2017. Since that time, MCP has continued to evolve to ensure that the foundational knowledge remains relevant to human disease, comprehensive in nature, and up-to-date.

Several factors are jointly considered when updating the curriculum of MCP. Changes range from how and when to include a new topic in a session through revision of the organizational structure of MCP each year. We highlight below three of these factors, all of which are central to reaching consensus on decisions regarding changes within the MCP curriculum.

(continued on page 2)

As part of our commitment to closing the feedback loop, the Office of Medical Education continuously reviews student feedback from evaluations, student panels, and other channels. In response, we have launched a **We Are Listening! Closing the Feedback Loop** series where we will highlight examples of student feedback along with the actions OME has taken. These updates reflect our continued effort to listen to student needs, strengthen trust and make meaningful improvements to the learning experience.



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Factors to Consider when Updating Course Curriculum (continued)

Major Discoveries

Advances in the biomedical field seem to move at the speed of light. From discoveries of disease-causing genes and organisms, to understanding altered biochemical pathways and their impact on cell and tissue pathology, MCP must provide an introduction to discoveries that change existing paradigms in biology and advance clinical medicine. As such, discussions among faculty as well as accounting for the current literature contribute to decisions to include new information in MCP. The LCME regularly issues new content guidelines, which may also entail modification of the MCP curriculum; new content must be integrated within the same year (horizontal) as well as across years (vertical). One example is the addition of newly developed, cutting-edge technologies to the session entitled "Gene Therapy"; the time for this session was also lengthened to facilitate discussions of these complex therapies.

Student Evaluations

Each session in every Phase 1 course is reviewed by a subset of medical students. These anonymous evaluations enable Course Directors to understand our students' perspectives of each class session. This feedback is essential to determine how to improve sessions from year to year. It also gauges the degree of active learning and the synergy between prework and content delivered during class. Furthermore, this feedback provides valuable insights to the teaching faculty.

Student Evaluations (continued)

One example is the change to deliver sequentially two sessions that were related, but previously had been offered in different weeks, namely "Embryology: The First Three Weeks of Development" and "Control of Cell Populations, Stem Cells, and Tissue Renewal."

Session Observations

As Course Directors, we personally attend as many sessions as possible. Observations from the back of the classroom provide a "feel for the room" and just how engaged students are with the session leader and the materials. In addition, it enables us to see first-hand which approaches work and which do not. Furthermore, it reveals gaps in content, misunderstandings of explanations, and points of confusion. This opportunity to attend classes leads to session-level improvements and adjustments to enhance not just the content, but how it is delivered. One example is the restructuring of the scope of Immunology Week (e.g., limiting content and making delivery more straightforward) along with recruitment of different teaching faculty who also perform research in the field.

Many adjustments entail minor changes in content and/or delivery, adjustments to the time allotted for different sessions, and/or changes in session leaders. Most changes in content fall under existing session learning objectives (SLOs), obviating the need for alteration of SLOs. In addition, consideration is given as to whether new content or alterations to current content warrant inclusion in Team-Based Learning sessions and/or the Final Exam. Overall, it is the responsibility of Phase 1 Course Directors to comprehensively review and improve their course each year.

Please contact Marycarmen Kunicki at marycarmen.kunicki@hmsom.edu for additional information on topics included in this newsletter and if you would like to share the findings of any quality improvement projects with us for future publications.