

Clinical Clerkship Education: A Roadmap for Positive Results

Executive summary

The clinical clerkship is an important aspect of all ATSU residential programs. These full-time supervised learning experiences in clinical settings will generally occur after the basic science curriculum and take place in hospitals, community health centers, and private offices. Clerkships provide students with experiences in all aspects of clinical practice and provide the foundation for successful patient care.

While individual ATSU programs have somewhat different methods of providing for clinical education based upon accreditation requirements, the final result must remain the same—graduating students well prepared for the next step in their careers—whether it is graduate clinical education or practice.

A recently released report, jointly developed by the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, American Association of Colleges of Nursing, Association of American Medical Colleges, and Physician Assistant Education Association, suggests a shortage of clinical education sites was caused by opening new allopathic and osteopathic medical schools, expansion of existing schools, and increasing class sizes; the increase in educational programs for nurse practitioners and physician assistants; as well as the growing number of Caribbean-based medical schools seeking U.S. clinical education sites.

Nurturing existing and identifying new clinical education sites will remain a challenge for all graduate health sciences programs nationwide. Following is a list of recommendations to assist ATSU's schools and colleges with developing new quality clinical education sites.

1. A common clerkship tracking system;
2. A University-wide “dashboard” of clinical education sites;
3. Pursuing University-wide affiliation agreements with major institutions and health networks in Missouri, Arizona, and nationally;
4. Modification of ATSU's current affiliation agreement;
5. Expansion of interprofessional education and collaboration;
6. Strengthening collaboration and commitment of community health centers to pursue additional clerkship opportunities; and
7. Better understanding of the motivations and needs of clinical preceptors.