The design and utility of institutional teaching awards: A literature review

Reference:

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Tags
Clinical domain
Scholar/Teaching

Educational domain
Teaching Awards

Background
Teaching awards are not new, especially in North America. Institutional teaching awards are a nearly universal tactic to further the mission of higher education with respect to effective teaching. However, little has been written about them in recent times. Even less is available regarding teaching awards to guide those involved in ensuring and enhancing effective teaching in the health professions. In addition, no review has incorporated the development of "teaching academies" that have become increasingly popular in medical schools to recognize faculty with superior skill or interest in education.

Purpose
The authors set out to describe the published English literature on teaching awards with special emphasis on 2 aspects: design and utility. The study was not limited to medicine.
Type of paper

Systematic review

Key Points on the Methods

Narrative review of English published literature from 1975-Feb 2011. Keywords are described, and employed in 5 common databases (MEDLINE, ERIC, PsychInfo, SCOPUS, & EMBASE). Inclusion criteria were papers that explicitly described institutional teaching awards, either design or outcomes. All methodology-types were eligible. Review of includes by pairs, with 3rd author as conflict-resolution method. A standardized data abstraction form was used. The lit search was run twice during the period of the development of this study. No quantitative scoring methods or outcomes was attempted.

Key Outcomes

128 articles were initially coded, of which 43 articles were included in the final results. Most articles were from the last two decades.

- Empirical data on outcomes (n=20)
- Descriptive of awards design (n=19)
- Opinion pieces on awards (n=14)

There was very limited information available on aspects such as: nomination criteria & process, selection criteria & process, prevalence of certain award benefits, and impact on learners. Most of the literature available reported positive impacts on recipients, especially Kirkpatrick Level 1 items such as satisfaction, perceived recognition, and prestige. However, negative, unintended impacts were also documented, including: negative reactions from colleagues, isolation, and frustrations with the ability to use or share teaching skills. Interestingly, teaching awards were associated in multiple studies with leaving the department!

With respect to promotions, the literature mentioned an increasing use of teaching awards for as evidence of scholarly work and worth for academic promotion. However, the literature reported that not all such awards were aligned with promotion criteria, not universally valued.

The authors recommend 3 key interrelated papers to guide any program evaluation on teaching awards (Menges 1996; Carusetta 2001; Sviniki & Menges 1996). These provide criteria and suggested items for to guide such a review.

Key Conclusions

The authors suggest that limited data are available, but offer several other recommendations:
1. Those considering institutional teaching awards should employ a scholarly approach to benefit from the published design options. These must be selected in the context of local culture and mission.
2. Educators need to be wary of unintended negative consequences of teaching awards when the design conflicts with aspects of the local context.
3. Stakeholder buy-in is critical to success.

Spare Keys – other take home points for clinician educators

This narrative review reminds us once again that we need to question our assumptions when tactics are chosen without a scholarly approach; some literature exists on many aspects of medical education, but we often fail to build on it.

Institutional teaching awards is an area ripe for research that advances the topic and informs us all.