

Educating surgical specialty residents for leadership and advocacy in Canadian health care reform

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The objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of a single educational session about health care systems issues and challenges on the perception of the resident as Health Advocate, Manager and Collaborator within that system.

A single 1.5-hour interactive session on health care policy was created as part of the general academic curriculum for senior obstetrics and gynecology residents at the University of Toronto. Included were topics related to the Canadian health care system: history, current status, comparison with other systems, issues and challenges, and potential roles for obstetrics and gynecology residents as a Health Advocate, Collaborator and Manager within that system.

A pre- and post-session survey was administered. Results of the survey revealed that this single session had a positive impact on residents' knowledge of the Canada Health Act, different means of financing and delivery of health care, and differences, strengths and weaknesses of the Canadian health care system compared with the US and British systems.

Both before and after the session, the most commonly identified health care system concerns were financial resources within the Canadian system, access to health care in general, access to primary care, wait times and the aging population. Advocacy efforts and participation in professional organizations were the most commonly cited ways residents suggested that they might engage in health care reform, and many participants stated that they would personally contribute by altering practice patterns and serving as advocates for their patients. Residents rated satisfaction with the session highly, and endorsed its future inclusion in the general curriculum.

We conclude that a single, interactive session on health care policy has a positive impact on obstetrics and gynecology residents' knowledge and perception of their personal role as Health Advocate, Collaborator and Manager within that system. This session could be relevant to these CanMEDS objectives in other surgical specialty training programs.