

LEADERSHIP SKILLS FOR NEONATAL FELLOWS

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Introduction

The CanMEDS competencies for the Roles of Manager, Professional, Communicator, and Collaborator are similar to the skills for Masters of Arts in Leadership at the Royal Roads University, Victoria, BC. This study examines some of the learning tools that facilitate the development of leadership skills for postgraduate trainees in Neonatology. Leadership skills are presently not taught systematically in any of the Canadian Fellowship Training Programs.

The general objectives included: to understand and manage self; to understand other and manage team relationships; and to understand organizational culture and adaptive systems.

Methods

In 2008, seven national and international neonatal fellows participated in a series of interconnected and interactive workshops, 20 hours over 10 weeks, plus approximately 20 hours of home assignments which consisted of guided reading and reflective movie dialogue supported by an electronic community forum. Models included the creation and maintenance of a safe environment; the Kolb cycle of experiential learning; the concentric circles model with self in the middle and outward consecutive expansion to relationships, team, organization, community, and systems. Concepts included relational dialogue, development of vision statement, discovery of character traits and temperament, self-awareness and reflection on practice, active and deep listening; emotional intelligence; managing relationship and conflict prevention; appreciative inquiry; organizational culture and change; team emotional intelligence; leadership styles and situational application. Materials used: The Leadership Challenge (Kouzes and Posner); Blink (Gladwell); MBTI and Keirseley Temperament sorter; Awareness Wheel (Wackman); Emotional Intelligence (Goleman); Ladder of Inference (Argyris); Stone Game (Schaeffer); Six Thinking Hats (De Bono); Barnga (Thiagarajan); Trains, Planes, and Automobiles; Twelve Angry; Pleasantville; Hotel Rwanda (movie re. leadership styles); additional articles and book chapters.

Measurement and analysis

Quantitative and qualitative measurements were performed before, during, and after the leadership program. Triangulation combined electronic survey with quantitative and open-ended qualitative questions before and after the leadership program, written questionnaire with open, closed, qualitative and quantitative questions before and after each session and focus-group interview at the end of the program. Analysis used Wilcoxon Signed Rank test for Likert scales; data reduction and coding to find themes for open-ended, qualitative questions, for focus-group interview, for electronic forum discussions and for one-on-one email communication.

Results

Participants were very satisfied with the content and the presentation of the leadership program. Some preliminary evidence indicated that the relationship with families and multi-disciplinary team members had improved. The electronic community forum gave the feeling of

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connectedness and provided access at convenient times. The use of movies at home added learning and reflection time outside the workshops while adding a fun factor in the development of tacit knowledge. Role-modeling and credibility of the facilitator and the creation of a safe environment for open dialogue contributed to feeling of satisfaction and to transformational learning. The participants provided evidence of increased emotional awareness, including self-awareness, empathy, and personality styles. Theory of leadership skills/styles were practiced in real-life setting and thought to be useful for leading multi-disciplinary, collaborative teams.

All participants recommended that this program be offered in other Fellowship Programs to fulfill CanMeds requirements for qualitative competencies as they believed that it helps in preparing to become a staff physician and to lead multi-disciplinary teams based on collaborative practice.

Reference:

Leadership learning for postgraduate trainees in neonatology (Master's thesis – John Van Aerde), 2009.