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Authors

Rudolf, Frannie
Oyama, Leslie
Hayden, Stephen
et al.

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6 Teaching Rapid Assessment Skills in Triage for the Emergency Medicine Clerkship

Rudolf F, Oyama L, Hayden S, Schwartz K, Fernandez J/ University of California, San Diego

Background: Rapidly assessing an undifferentiated patient and developing a gestalt for “sick vs not sick” is a core component of EM. Developing this skill requires clinical experience and honing an instinct, which can be difficult to attain during a typical EM clerkship. We propose that a teaching shift in triage provides a unique environment for students to demonstrate and learn rapid assessment skills.

Learning Objective: We developed a novel approach to teaching medical students rapid assessment of patients in the ED by implementing a teaching shift in triage.

Curricular Design: Medical students were scheduled one three-hour shift in triage during their EM clerkship. The teaching attending first role-modeled a targeted rapid assessment in triage. The student then assessed patients under direct supervision, discussed their immediate differential and proposed an initial workup. The attending gave real time feedback using a standardized direct observation tool. Students completed a pre and post survey (five-point Likert scale) to assess their comfort level in the following areas; performing a medical screening exam, determining “sick vs not sick”, developing a targeted differential diagnosis, and ordering an initial diagnostic workup. Data was analyzed using a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test.

Impact/Effectiveness: Twenty-one students participated in the triage shifts in the fall 2019. There were significant improvements in self-assessments of all five survey areas (see Figure 1) ($p < .0001$). All students either strongly agreed or agreed that the triage shift was a worthwhile experience. Replicating this intervention requires securing attending time. We found benefits to the teaching attending included performing direct observation, giving real-time feedback, and targeted teaching moments on the fly. Additionally, an attending in triage can potentially decrease left without being seen and improve the operational efficiency of the ED.

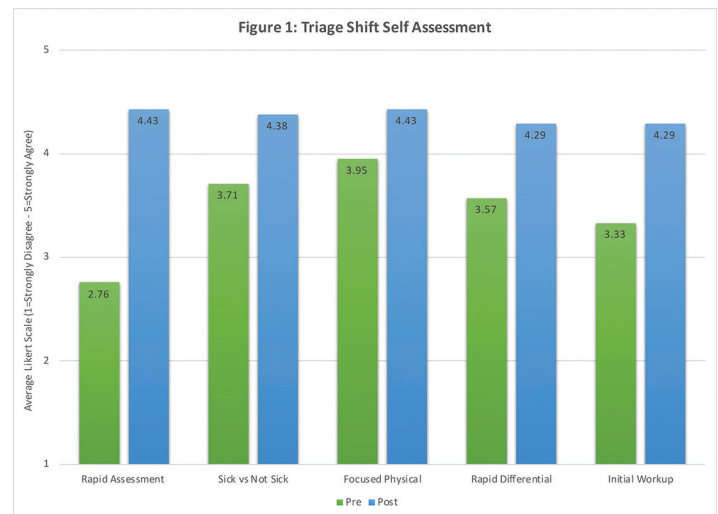


Image 1.