Precepting 101: Helpful Hints and Tips

Establish a syllabus for the rotation:  A syllabus can contain information such as rotation hours, expectations, summary of rotation and site, contact information for preceptors and site, goals for the rotation, etc.  You could also add info about parking, lunch policies, etc.  We have some examples that you can request by email.

Establish a master calendar for rotation schedules:  The calendar could include days off for professional leave, meetings, rounds, special events, etc.

Specify project due dates:  Be very specific on due dates for projects, DI questions, looking something up, etc.

For example, if you ask a student to look up today’s lab values in a patient’s chart and you expect the student to do this in about 20 minutes, tell the student this timeframe.  This establishes a very specific expectation of time allotted for this task while automatically guiding the student with a specific amount of time.

Create an information notebook or binder for your rotation site:  This does not have to take a lot of time or effort.  It can be simply started by adding pertinent information or articles for the rotation to the binder.  You can even enlist students to find articles and place a copy of each article in the binder for future students.  Soon enough, you will have a useful reference book for the students.  Some information that could be included:

Articles applicable to your practice setting (require students to read specific articles for discussion)

Examples:  JNC 7, NCEP, IDSA, Beers criteria, Hot topics in pharmacy (MTM, Plan B, narcotic abuse/use, med errors, reimbursement, Medicaid, Medicare, pharmacy liability issues, ethical issues)

Keep copies of former students’ projects or presentations* in the binder:

Patient handouts
Presentation handouts

*Note:  This can help students determine presentation or project topics and also help guide them to topics that have not been done since they can see what has been completed recently.

Ask former students and residents to give their insight of what they think would be useful to include in the binder.

Create unique experiences for students to greatly contribute to the future of pharmacy practice:

Medication Therapy Management**:  Students can help create MTM programs as well as see patients.  Students can interview and document patients’ medication histories and assist in creating necessary forms or documentation for these types of services.

Medication Reconciliation**:  Students are in a perfect position to take medication histories and document in a SOAP note form the information they have gathered.  They learn this in school—let them practice in a real setting.

**Note:  The students’ work should be reviewed by a pharmacist for accuracy and completeness.

Keep an ongoing list of drug information (DI) questions, projects, and presentations for students to complete:  Assign DI questions that you didn’t immediately know the answer to—unique or off-label indications for medications (i.e. estrogen for nose bleeds) or questions that about new medications or medications that are seldom used.  Make a list of projects or in-services that you wish you could complete but don’t have the time.

Get students involved in patient case work:  This one may seem obvious to some.  If you have students shadow or observe more often than actually interact with patients, consider changing this.  Most students learn best from actively participating in an activity (versus observing or reading about it).  Let them talk to patients and analyze medication profiles.  This is easier in an ambulatory clinic or a hospital setting and more of a challenge in community pharmacy when the focus is generally on dispensing; however, this can be implemented in any setting using creative means.

Consider assigning students a patient medication profile

Assign one case per day to start (for example).

This automatically gives them a task for the day.

Gives you topics to discuss without having to come up with them and it is more relevant as you can relate topics to a real patient.

Students can look up indications and doses for all drugs in a patient’s profile, education, counseling points, and monitoring (whether you have lab data or not) for all drugs in profile, providers, and they should be analyzing drug-drug interactions.

If you have any tips you would like to share, feel free to email those to Janet Cooley at cooley@pharmacy.arizona.edu.

Once we get more tips, we will pass these on to all of our preceptors.  A huge THANK YOU to all of our preceptors—we really appreciate the time and effort you dedicate to our pharmacy students!  We couldn’t do this without you!