

Facilitating Access to Sports Medicine: Establishing A Sports Medicine Interest Group

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ABSTRACT

Sideline shadowing and physician mentorship are crucial aspects of career progression within sports medicine. Without prior institutional connections, many medical students find it difficult to access these opportunities during medical school. A chartered sports medicine interest group can help close this gap. **PURPOSE:** The Sports Medicine Interest Group (SMIG) was created to facilitate access to mentorship and sideline shadowing opportunities at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA). A program evaluation survey was administered to assess impact. **METHODS:** A faculty mentor was identified, and permission was granted for students to regularly shadow sideline coverage for the University of Texas at San Antonio women's soccer team. A group chat was created to facilitate communication amongst interest group members and a sideline shadowing sign-up sheet was distributed. Interest group members identified additional sports medicine physicians and invited them to give lectures. A fundraiser selling merchandise was conducted. At the end of the academic year, interest group members were invited to participate in a program evaluation survey. **RESULTS:** Forty-seven medical students joined the interest group. Five physicians from four different subspecialties gave a guest lecture, with an average of 14 attendees per lecture [primary care (7/21 evaluation survey response rate (RR)), PM&R (3/16 RR), orthopedic surgery (2/8 RR), ophthalmology (5/15 RR)]. On a 1-5 Likert scale, students agreed that lectures were worthwhile (4.73 mean), expanded their knowledge of sports medicine (4.58 mean), and guided their career goals (4.50 mean). \$1322 was collected by the fundraiser and food was provided at each lecture. Six students shadowed sideline game coverage (5/6 RR). On a 1-5 Likert scale, students agreed that sideline shadowing was an impactful experience (4 median) and reduced their stress during medical school (4 median). Students indicated that they planned to care for athletes in their future practice (5 median) and complete a fellowship in sports medicine (3 median). **CONCLUSION:** Creating a medical student interest group facilitates access to sports medicine learning opportunities. Identifying mentors, fostering communication, and building a network are keys to establishing and distributing opportunities. Future initiatives should focus on expanding sideline shadowing capacity to include other sports and maintain positive longitudinal relations with guest lecturers.