Evaluating medical students

Lisa Dodson, MD
Director, Oregon Area Health Education Center
Oregon Health & Science University

Feedback
- Timely
- Informal
- Formative
- Specific
- Improvement

Evaluation
- Scheduled
- Formal
- Summative
- Global
- Grading

What is your gold standard?
- Did the student achieve the objectives?
- Will you remember this student in 5 years?
- Does this student stand out in one or more aspects of patient care?
- Did the student progress beyond their initial abilities?

Our expectations
- Orientation for student
- Ongoing formative feedback (daily)
- Mid-rotation feedback session (2-3 weeks)
- Professionalism evaluation
- Prompt completion of paperwork

Potential pitfalls in evaluation
- Halo effect
- Insufficient evidence
- "You never told me that"
- "But I NEED honors"
- "Uh-Oh"—should they pass?
- "Lake Wobegon" effect

Halo effect
- One outstanding (often personal) characteristic that is not really related to what they are being evaluated on
  - Friendly, nice, outgoing, and well liked but clinically mediocre
  - Quiet, reserved or introspective student but clinically excellent
  - Shares a common interest at which they excel
**Insufficient evidence**
- At the end of the rotation you have a sense that student performance was in some way inadequate but can't recall enough detail to provide specifics.
  - Frequent formative feedback, develop a system for recording and providing
  - BE SPECIFIC in daily feedback

**"You never told me that"**
- The first time a student hears about not meeting your standards should not be when they get their grade
- No surprises/ No assumptions
- If you expect the student to read nightly, tell them so. If you want them to pre-round daily, tell them so.

**"But I NEED Honors"**
- Students should be evaluated on their current performance, not on their future plans
- Did they achieve the objectives of your course?
- Attitude/skills/knowledge in your area may be different than in their future area of expertise

**Uh-OH-Should this student pass?**
- Contact your course director or the SOM Dean's office as soon as you suspect a problem
- Use the professionalism form
- Document as many specifics as possible
- Don't be afraid to bring an issue up—
  - It may be a non-issue, in which case it won't hurt the student
  - It may be an issue which we can then help the student address

**The "Lake Wobegon" effect**
- Yes, all our students are above average (compared to the general population) but:
  - They are medical students, they have redistributed into a new normal distribution
  - Evaluation is a sometimes painful but necessary activity for their professional growth
  - Not all students are HONORS at all things. Overuse of honors diminishes its value
  - Near Honors or Satisfactory, when justified, is a perfectly fine grade and will not harm them.

**Questions?**