

HELPING CLINICIANS HELP PATIENTS

Facilitating the
Transition into the
Clinical Learning
Environment

CPR

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Chapter 2

PROGRAM BENEFITS

Chapter 2 describes the general benefits of the program to clinicians and institutions and the program's structure and features, and identifies specific ways that it can be helpful, especially during the current pandemic and in the event of future health care crises

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CHAPTER 2:

PROGRAM BENEFITS

It is possible for medical education programs and healthcare institutions to integrate well-being, wellness, and resiliency activities into all aspects of education and training in the organization. Effective interventions can be relatively inexpensive and can have a large return on investment. One of the most notable advantages to the Clinician Program for Resilience (CPR) is that it creates a mutually beneficial situation for both institutions and clinicians.

CPR is based on the MedRAP program, which was originally developed to facilitate the transition of residents from medical school to residency. However, most of the modules in this book are relevant to anyone interested in aiding the transition of healthcare professional trainees and improving their training and work environment. This includes medical students, medical fellows, nurses, and allied health professionals. CPR addresses relevant issues for all of these trainees, such as: effective orientations; best practices for anticipated challenges they are likely to encounter; development of organizational, communication, and leadership skills; empowering trainees to participate in improving their training and work environment; and individual assistance for personal and professional difficulties.

CLINICIAN BENEFITS

Creating systems to support clinician well-being and resiliency can also promote the development of future leaders who can help cultivate and foster positive working environments where healthcare professionals can thrive. Clinicians need to see that their healthcare organization values the well-being of its staff and endeavors to cultivate an efficient and positive work environment. Implementing programs such as CPR demonstrates this commitment.

CPR accelerates trainees' transition from graduate medical training to post-graduate clinical training. The program is uniquely proactive in its approach, beginning with a needs analysis, followed by the development of curriculum specific to the identified stressors first-year clinicians are likely to encounter. Strategies and tools are provided to handle challenges trainees are likely to experience in their specific rotations, hospitals, and specialties. The curriculum includes discussion and activities meant to teach trainees how to constructively address common stressors.

The ongoing confidential feedback collection, as well as the continuous quality improvement (CQI) component, allows clinicians to provide suggestions on how to remove or alleviate these stressors and bring constructive change to the hospital work environment. Empowering the trainees to make a difference contributes to their well-being, reduces burnout, increases professionalism, and helps improve care. Without the safe environment, trainees may observe and encounter inefficiencies in patient care, yet not feel comfortable reporting or addressing them. Clinician reluctance to relay inefficiencies causes additional frustration among house staff, who may lack training in the organizational techniques imperative to produce change.

CPR also provides an individual assistance component for those clinicians experiencing personal and professional adjustment issues, which is especially important in the post-COVID-19 era.

SUMMARY OF KEY CLINICIAN BENEFITS

- Accelerates trainees' transition from graduate medical training to post-graduate clinical training, and subsequently into practice
- Provides trainees with skills that contribute to their professional development
- Anticipates and identifies stressors trainees are likely to experience
- Utilizes strategies to alleviate stress
- Facilitates a positive and effective training environment
- Empowers trainees to improve their work environment

INSTITUTIONAL BENEFITS

Improved well-being and stress reduction for healthcare professionals also yields institutional benefits, including improved patient care and greater operational efficiencies. The MedRAP program would not have lasted for 25 years had it not met the needs of both the institution and management.

CPR provides a forum for early detection of organizational problems and systematic issues, as well as a safety net for clinicians in danger of succumbing to burnout or maladaptive behaviors. The program's ability to identify early adjustment problems faced by individuals can help preserve a hospital's substantial investment in recruitment, training, and retention of new clinicians.

From an operations standpoint, the continuous quality improvement (CQI) component creates an opportunity for greater efficiencies, potentially contributing to cost savings. CQI involves the entire healthcare team in improving collaboration, bringing positive organizational change, and enabling early identification of organizational problems that clinicians experience related to clinical care and hospital efficiency. Systematic errors are identified through specifically designed questionnaires tailored to each affiliated hospital. Potential solutions are then formulated and presented to the program director, administration, and the management of the healthcare team in each affiliated hospital. This process facilitates collaboration between the clinicians, training program directors, faculty, and healthcare team members, and can break down many of the invisible barriers often experienced by these groups.

Healthcare institutions can benefit from utilizing organizational interventions such as CPR to foster a positive organizational culture and empower healthcare professionals and medical trainees to report mistreatment or systematic problems, without fear of retribution. Such an approach also contributes to enhancing well-being, professional development, and professionalism—something lectures and ethics seminars alone cannot do.

SUMMARY OF KEY INSTITUTIONAL BENEFITS

- Early identification of organizational problems
- Early identification of individual adjustment problems
- Facilitation of collaboration among the entire healthcare team
- Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) in the affiliated hospitals
- Assistance with recruitment and retention of clinicians

HOW CPR BUILDS RESILIENCE AND PROMOTES WELL-BEING

Resilience is defined as “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties,” and CPR focuses on positive coping strategies and a structured curriculum to address many of the challenges facing clinicians in training today. Such programs could be of great assistance in the post COVID-19 era since they encompass mechanisms, such as encouraging small group meetings for essential mentoring and support, to address the unique challenges that on-line training will pose.

Specific program strategies to build resilience and support trainees include:

- Mentorship experience with group leaders and trainees in small groups, in a safe, confidential, and supportive environment
- Structured curriculum with a focus on essential competencies for professional success, including organizational, communication, and leadership skills
- Identification of likely challenges clinicians may encounter in their work environment
- Presentation of insights and strategies from peers, mentors, and facilitator to help clinicians function more efficiently and effectively
- Focused organizational improvement which engages healthcare professionals in a collaborative process to improve the professional relationships between clinicians and the leadership of the organization
- Individual assistance to identify clinicians experiencing difficulties (including PTSD and moral injury) and intervene as necessary, including outside referrals

All of these components can help in reducing the risk of burnout, building resilience, and creating a healthy learning and working environment for clinicians. A comprehensive approach is needed, especially now.

ADVANTAGES SPECIFIC TO THE COVID-19 ERA AND BEYOND

Programs such as CPR can be valuable in the current COVID-19 era and in future pandemics for the following reasons:

- If learning is occurring on-line, the gratification of personal interaction will be missed by many. Since the program's groups are small (10-15 people), social distancing will be easy to practice.
- Because changes in medical education can result from a healthcare crisis, it will be more important than ever to get honest feedback about the clinicians' experiences, in a safe environment, to assess the impact of the changes.
- Maintaining the well-being of clinicians will be especially important given the changes that can occur as a result of a healthcare crisis.
- CPR can help trainees feel more empowered by allowing them to report the challenges they encounter in their work and training environment, and by involving them in finding solutions and optimizing their learning experience.
- Since issues of mental health and suicide have increased as a result of the recent crisis, the program's mechanism for monitoring individual trainees and assisting them when they encounter both personal and professional difficulties is important.
- On-line learning compromises the informal training that occurs on clinical wards, where trainees observe senior clinicians, treat patients, and interact with their families and the entire healthcare team. The program's method of formalizing this informal training outside of the clinical wards will be advantageous.
- Mentorship relationships will also be compromised as more training occurs on-line. CPR utilizes senior clinicians as group leaders for the trainees, which will provide the trainees with an opportunity to develop additional mentorship relationships outside of the clinical ward.

The table below was used at BCM to highlight the benefits for both residents and institutions, and refers to the required ACGME competencies and milestones met by the program for medical residents. The same benefits would be applicable to other healthcare trainees.

SUMMARY OF BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND INSTITUTIONS

SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES	RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)	ACGME COMPETENCIES AND MILESTONES ADDRESSED
Organizational Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps to reduce the impact of cohort turnover • Accelerates transitions during academic changeovers • Helps improve clinicians' efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice-Based Learning and Improvement • Patient Care • Interpersonal and Communications Skills
Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves communication and collaboration with patients, their families, and the healthcare team • Contributes to patient satisfaction, which is linked to cost of care and reimbursement • Contributes to improved quality of code status discussion • Promotes effective management of negative feelings towards patients and families that can interfere in care • Assists with risk management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal and Communications Skills • Professionalism
Continuous Quality Improvement/ Management Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates early identification of organizational problems • Improves hospital efficiency • Improves collaboration with healthcare team • Improves efficiency of patient care • Increases clinicians' participation in improving health care delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems-Based Practice • Practice-Based Learning and Improvement
Leadership Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases efficient functioning of team leaders • Improves educational experience of trainees • Improves patient care by minimizing impact of cohort changeovers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionalism • Interpersonal and Communications Skills

Annual Evaluation and Planning

- Ensures ongoing evolution of program, to continue providing an effective response to participants' and management's needs

Promoting professional development, resilience, and well-being simultaneously

