

Survey of Ambulatory Care Preceptors Regarding SOAP Note Writing in Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences (APPEs)

Miranda R. Andrus, PharmD, BCPS; Dana G. Carroll, PharmD, BCPS; Katelyn M. Lisenby, PharmD, BCPS; Lynn Stevenson, PharmD, BCPS; Shirley Fan, MS; Philippe Gaillard, PhD; Cherry W. Jackson, PharmD, BCPP
Auburn University Harrison School of Pharmacy, Auburn, AL

INTRODUCTION

- The SOAP (subjective, objective, assessment, and plan) note was originally developed in the early 1970's to standardize information communicated through a patient's medical record.¹ At that time only physicians were allowed to document in a patient's chart. Since then the SOAP note format has been embraced and implemented by multiple health care professionals as a means of communicating information regarding a patient's care.^{3,4}
- Today, SOAP notes are commonly used as an interdisciplinary communication tool for all health care professionals including pharmacists.^{3,4}
- Preparing pharmacy students to write SOAP notes allows them to provide important patient care feedback and pharmacotherapy recommendations to other professionals caring for an individual patient.

Rationale for Study

- SOAP note documentation is an important skill that is taught by Schools of Pharmacy. The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) standards state that graduating pharmacy students must be "competent" in documenting "patient recommendations" to deliver "effective patient care."² The standards also state that "preceptors" should provide "consistent, meaningful feedback" to students.²
- Students write many SOAP notes during the final year of their training while taking Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) rotations with clinical preceptors.
- While a variety of pharmacy literature discusses the importance of training pharmacy students how to write SOAP notes in the classroom, very little literature describes SOAP note writing for actual patients in APPE, or the number and type of SOAP notes (comprehensive vs. problem focused) completed. There is also a lack of information available about assessment and feedback of SOAP note writing ambulatory APPE's.

OBJECTIVES

- Fourth year pharmacy students (P4s) routinely write SOAP notes for ambulatory care APPEs. While many preceptors provide formative assessment of SOAPs, there is a lack of validated, objective assessment methods in the literature.
- The objective of this study was to gather information from preceptors regarding SOAP note writing experiences and assessment methods currently utilized during ambulatory care APPEs.

METHODS

- Ambulatory care preceptors from 5 schools of pharmacy across the country were surveyed (n=205).
 - Schools chosen for the survey were a balance of public and private programs with diverse ambulatory care patient populations and demographics.
- Surveys were completed by preceptors from November 2015 – June 2016.
- Questions asked included quantity and type of SOAP notes written by P4 students on APPEs, feedback and assessment methods used by faculty preceptors, time required for providing feedback, how prepared P4 students are for writing SOAP notes, and the areas that students struggle with the most.

Statistical Analyses

- Statistical analyses were performed using Statistical Analysis Software (SAS).
 - The Fisher's exact test was used to assess variables versus the dependent at a significance level of 0.05.
 - Dependent variables were assessed among institutions/schools versus globally using the gamma test statistic at a significance level of 0.05.
 - Fisher's exact test was used to test the rate of adjunct/affiliate versus full time faculty that grade SOAP notes



RESULTS

- Overall response rate to the survey: 62% (128/205)
 - 75% (96/128) of preceptors have students write SOAP notes on their rotation
 - 51% of those preceptors require problem-focused notes vs. comprehensive notes
 - The majority of preceptors (84%) do not formally grade SOAP notes, however most require revisions to SOAP notes (76%) after formative feedback.
 - Of those who grade SOAPs (n=15), 10 use a rubric, and two out of the 10 rubrics have been validated.
 - Full time faculty are more likely to grade SOAP notes than adjunct/affiliate faculty (p=0.0297) and more likely to provide written feedback (p=0.0435)
 - About 50% of preceptors spend less than 10 minutes providing feedback on notes, while 34% spend 11-20 minutes.
 - The majority of preceptors feel that students struggle the most with the assessment portion of notes, and 51% felt that students were prepared to write SOAPs during their P4 ambulatory APPE rotations.
 - There was a moderately positive association (0.7018) between the number of SOAP notes students write per week and the likelihood of giving verbal feedback vs. other types of feedback (p=0.0399)
 - There was a moderately negative association (-0.6458) between the number of students a preceptor has per year on average and providing a formal grade on SOAP notes (p=0.0005).
- ### Differences among schools
- There were significant differences between the 5 schools in the percentage of preceptors that formally grade SOAP notes, ranging from 2 to 45% (p=0.0012)
 - There were no significant differences between schools in how prepared students are to write SOAP notes on APPE (p=0.309)

RESULTS (Continued)

Demographics

Outcome	School A n=57	School B n=17	School C n=19	School D n=15	School E n=20
Preceptor Practice Setting					
Academic center	12%	45%	43%	14%	18%
Hospital based clinic	3%	9%	14%	36%	18%
HMO	44%	0%	0%	0%	9%
Private practice	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%
VA medical center	12%	18%	14%	21%	45%
Other	26%	27%	29%	21%	9%
% Adjunct/affiliate faculty	86%	36%	21%	50%	82%
Average # of students per block					
1	60%	64%	21%	50%	55%
1-2	26%	36%	29%	43%	36%
2-3	9%	0%	50%	7%	0%
3-4	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%
>4	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
% that require students to write SOAP notes	79%	71%	74%	93%	55%

CONCLUSION

- The majority of ambulatory preceptors have students write SOAP notes on APPEs and require revisions after formal or informal feedback.
- There is a need for validated, objective assessments of SOAP note writing in ambulatory care APPE experiences.

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