

THCI Online Learning Campus is “the right tool”

THCI’s new Online Learning Campus (OLC) – a secure, interactive environment that helps faculty teach, and residents learn, about the ACGME general competencies – is receiving an enthusiastic response from medical educators.

“The Online Learning Campus is the right tool at the right time because it assists faculty in teaching and documenting activities in the two most difficult ACGME general competencies: Systems-based Practice and Practice-based Learning and Improvement,” says Cynthia Silber, MD, associate dean for Graduate Medical Education at Jefferson Medical College/Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia. Assessing and documenting learning in these competencies is increasingly recognized to be important to a program’s effectiveness and accreditation. Using the online campus, program directors can create summary reports of their residents’ activities, linked to the ACGME competencies.

The OLC features instructional tools and resources, including learning modules and self-assessments that have been developed by nationally recognized content experts. Applied learning exercises (AppLEs) enable residents to utilize newly acquired knowledge in their day-to-day clinical settings, while personal portfolios let faculty and residents track, assess, and document progress. Reports on learners’ progress are also available.

THCI has just released the Online Learning Campus for subscription access by training programs. Visit www.thci.org for a demo, or call 617-636-1000 for more information.

Medical Education Online Learning Consortium gets off to strong start

Confronted with the challenge to train residents in new competencies without overloading the curriculum, faculty at five academic medical institutions joined forces this past year to form the Medical Education Online Learning Consortium in partnership with Tufts Health Care Institute.

Funded by a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), the consortium is spearheading a national effort to evaluate the use of online training and assessment in Systems-based Practice (SBP) and Practice-based Learning and Improvement (PBLI) for residency programs. Participants include Baystate Medical Center, Caritas Christi St. Elizabeth’s and Carney Hospitals, Riverside Methodist Hospital, Thomas Jefferson University Hospital/Jefferson Medical College, and University of Florida College of Medicine.

The prime objective of the consortium is to evaluate how the centralized online learning resources in THCI’s Online Learning Campus can be adapted for integration into local programs to improve learning outcomes cost-effectively. Additional goals include building a community of medical educators to share best practices for applying the technology-mediated curriculum, and preparing for broader dissemination of the online resources.

Through the grant-funded project, participating programs are integrating selected learning modules, exercises, and assessments in their curricula in the following specialties: internal medicine, family medicine, pediatrics, medicine/pediatrics, OB/GYN, and emergency medicine. Formative feedback suggests that to attain the most impact and effectiveness in the use of THCI’s online “toolkit,” programs must have: a) top-level institutional commitment; b) resident and faculty participation on the design and implementation team; c) exercises (either THCI’s or their own) that enable residents to apply new knowledge in SBP and PBLI topics in their clinical settings.

THCI and consortium partners have disseminated their work and early findings with posters and workshops on the project at several national, professional meetings.

THCI National Conference Sept. 9-10

“Leading Curricular Change: Skills and Strategies for Success” is the theme of this year’s national conference, Sept. 9-10 in Cambridge, Mass. Aimed at helping GME faculty implement curriculum changes mandated by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, the conference will focus on three areas: the personal dynamics of change; scholarly recognition and publication as a reward for change; and negotiation skills. Visit www.thci.org for more information.

Educating physicians across the continuum



Viewing physician education and training as a career-spanning chain of learning – instead of three distinct phases of undergraduate, graduate, and continuing medical education – would do much to restore public trust in the medical profession. And competency-based education (CBE) can be a key component of this radically different approach to physician training.

That was the message Deborah E. Powell, MD, dean of University of Minnesota Medical School and assistant vice president for clinical affairs, delivered to more than 200 physicians and medical educators from across the country who attended THCI's 7th annual conference last fall in Boston.

The power of CBE flows from its potential to transform medical education and improve the overall quality of health care in the U.S., Dr. Powell said. CBE requires identifying desired learning outcomes at five distinct stages of skill and knowledge acquisition through which learners progress: from novice to advanced beginner, to competent, proficient, and expert.

Hershey S. Bell, MD, FAAFP, formerly chief medical officer and vice president for medical education and quality at Hamot Medical Center in Erie, Penn., and now assistant dean of clinical education at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine, also in Erie, told attendees that good assessment systems and tools play a major role in determining whether educational programs meet their objective of making competency a "habit" among all of its learners. Dr. Bell also noted that formative evaluation, or feedback, is the cornerstone of CBE. "Effective feedback facilitates dialogue and fosters a learner's self-discovery. By emphasizing trust and acceptance, teachers can tap into real learning potential."

For a slide summary and evaluation of the THCI conference, "Competency Assessment: Forethought Not Afterthought: Current Practices and Innovations for Graduate Medical Education," go to www.thci.org and click on "View highlights."

THCI conducts faculty development programs tailored to meet the needs of specific groups. For more information, call 617-636-1000.

Thinking about... Giving feedback

Critical to adopting a competency-based approach to educating physicians is providing systematic and supportive feedback. This demonstrates the teacher's commitment to learners and justifies the faith of patients and other medical education stakeholders in teaching institutions, says Robin Richman, MD, FACOG, THCI's chief medical officer. The following steps will help.

1. **Label it feedback.** Tell the learner that what you are about to say is intended as feedback.
2. **Give it perspective.** Provide comments from your point of view and put them in context, as opposed to just saying that what the learner did was wrong.
3. **Check in.** Ask learners for thoughts on your feedback and if it is valid. Conflicts in perspective will lead to a secondary discussion.
4. **Do it in a timely manner.** Providing feedback in real time gives it more impact and meaning.
5. **Document what you said.** Teaching institutions increasingly are being held accountable by accrediting bodies and others for what and how they teach.

THCI training goes on the road

THCI is conducting training workshops at institutions across the country to help program directors, designated institutional officials (DIOs), GME faculty, and others involved with curriculum development and coordination to address the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) general competency requirements. The first workshop was held in Denver in December 2003, followed by programs in Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana, and Minnesota, to date.

Other THCI programs being offered in 2004 include the "Residency Rotation on Managing Care," a one-week rotation implemented in collaboration with Tufts Health Plan. This program is offered to up to 40 senior and chief residents from New England and New York who want to better understand issues related to managing care with attention to both cost and quality.

THCI is also offering "Getting Ready for Practice," a series for residents transitioning from training to practice.

If you would like to develop a rotation modeled after THCI's successful program, or you want more information on other THCI training programs, please contact Jennifer Coplon, PhD, at jennifer_coplon@tufts-health.com, or call 617-636-1000.

THCI's Mission

The mission of Tufts Health Care Institute is to help physicians and other health care professionals practice effectively and lead change in a high quality, cost-effective health care system.