

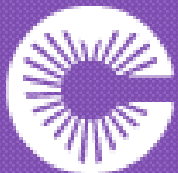
The Diagnosis and Management of the Learner in Difficulty

Interactive Workshop

APPD Annual Spring Meeting

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Objectives

- Define and recognize a “learner in difficulty.”
- Practice applying a diagnostic approach to a learner in difficulty.
- Develop management strategies for assisting struggling learners.

“The Learner in Difficulty”

VS.

“The Difficult Learner”

The Learner in Difficulty



The Learner in Difficulty

- “A learner with academic performance that is significantly below expected.” (Quirk, 1994)
- “Any learner struggling with his or her clinical placement.” (Practicaldoc.com, 2015)
- “A student at risk for receiving less than ‘pass’ because of concerns regarding his or her knowledge base, clinical skills, or professionalism.” (Bernstein, et al, 2013)

The Learner in Difficulty

- Challenges in addressing learners in difficulty
 - Lack of comfort/confidence in addressing issue
 - Don't want to upset people
 - Fear of reprisal
 - No time
 - “Not my problem”

The Learner in Difficulty

- ◉ Good reasons to address learners in difficulty
 - Obligation to learner
 - Learners in difficulty may experience more stress/distress than other learners
 - Easier to correct problems before they are ingrained
 - Obligation to profession
 - Learners in Difficulty become Physicians in Difficulty
 - “It is our problem”
 - Obligation to patients

Diagnosing the Learner

- Just like ill patients, learners in difficulty often present with symptoms of an underlying diagnosis

Diagnosing the Learner

○ Differential Diagnosis:

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Attitude
- Learner
- Teacher
- System

“K-Salts”

Diagnosing the Learner

○ Differential Diagnosis: Knowledge

- Deficiencies in the basic and/or clinical sciences
- Difficulty interpreting information

Diagnosing the Learner

○ Differential Diagnosis: Skills

- Inadequate data acquisition (history and/or exam)
- Poor organization
- Faulty clinical reasoning
- Inability to form trusting relationships with patients
- Deficient procedure-related technical skill

Diagnosing the Learner

○ Differential Diagnosis:

Attitude

- Lack of motivation
- Poor insight

Diagnosing the Learner

○ Differential Diagnosis: Learner

- Stress/anxiety
- Cultural differences or language barriers
- Sleep deprivation
- Substance abuse
- Learning disability
- Mental illness

Diagnosing the Learner

○ Differential Diagnosis: Teacher

- Stress
- Bias
- Personal dissatisfaction
- Underdeveloped teaching skills
- Lack of motivation

Diagnosing the Learner

○ Differential Diagnosis: System

- Inadequate previous clinical exposure
- Overwhelming workload
- Inconsistency of teaching and/or supervision
- Unaccustomed to technology
- “Hidden Curriculum”

Diagnosing the Learner

- Take a history
 - Learner's goals
 - Academic history
 - Social circumstances
 - Wellness
 - Academic relationships
 - Learning context
- Reach out to others involved in learner's training

Diagnosing the Learner

- Perform an exam (Observation)
 - H&P
 - Pre-rounding
 - Family Centered Rounds
- Reflect on your own interactions with learner

Diagnosing the Learner: Small Group Exercise:

○ Part 1:

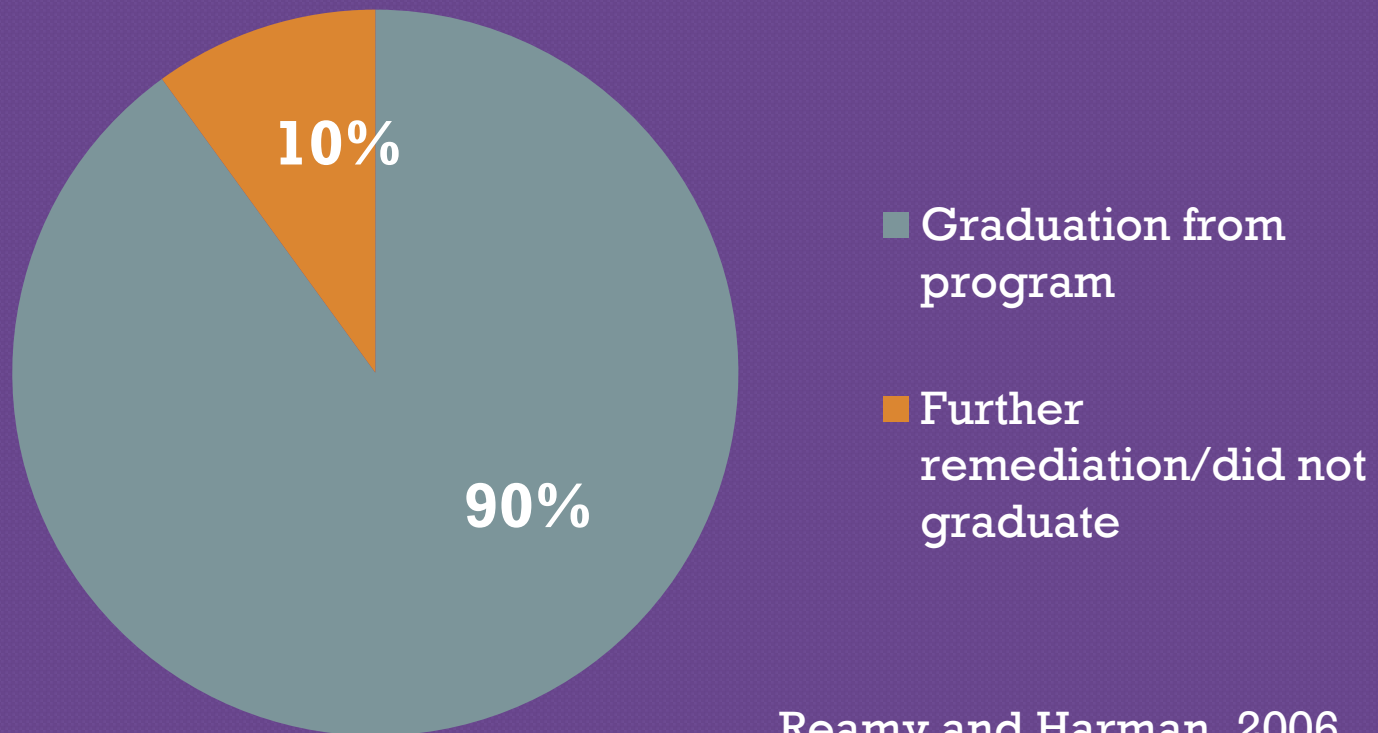
- What are the top 1-3 most salient problems/deficiencies/difficulties?
- What questions would you ask the learner to gather more information?
- What other steps would you take to gather information?

○ Part 2:

- What is your differential diagnosis for this learner's difficulty?

Management of the Learner

Percentage of residents achieving success following remediation



Reamy and Harman, 2006

Management of the Learner

- Always document findings (e.g. Evaluations)
- Reach out to Educational Administration
 - Clerkship Directors
 - Chief residents
 - Program Directors / Associate Program Directors
 - Fellowship Director
- Know resources
 - GME Resident and Fellow Support Program
 - Student Affairs Office
 - Legal

Management of the Learner

○ Knowledge:

- Assess current knowledge as a basis for improvement
- Identify and utilize potential specific resources (e.g. text book, Pediatrics in Review/Up to Date, PREP questions)
- Provide practice opportunities
 - Small group
 - Workshop
 - Individual coaching
 - Simulation

Management of the Learner

○ Skills:

- Demonstration and modeling
- Direct observation
- Assessment of clinical reasoning
- Offer directed feedback based on strengths and deficiencies

Management of the Learner

○ Attitude:

- Using reflection to Identify motivating and detrimental factors
- Identify and modify lapses in professionalism
- Offer techniques for mindfulness to minimize distress and cynicism

Management of the Learner

○ Learner:

- Reframe a challenging event as a learning opportunity
- Facilitate strategies for resilience and wellness
 - Sleep hygiene
 - Work-life balance
 - Recognize limits of one's control
 - Behavioral and/or mental health intervention

Management of the Learner

○ Teacher:

- Utilize reflection in own practice
- Practice mindfulness in role as medical educator
- Identify and reduce/eliminate biases
- Understand factors contributing to own wellness

Management of the Learner

○ System:

- Be receptive to feedback and open to change
- Advocate for improvement and modifications
- Collaboration and sharing of similar experiences (teacher and learner)

Management of the Learner: Small Group Exercise:

○ Part 3:

- What would be some management strategies for your learner in difficulty?

Summary

- Learners in Difficulty are common and have a variety of etiologies for their difficulties.
- Creating and exploring a differential diagnosis (“K-SALTS”) can help discover opportunities to assist these learners.
- Developing and implementing management strategies in collaboration with the learner results in improvement most of the time.

Questions?