

WVSOM's New Preclinical Curriculum

In 2011 WVSOM received approval from the American Osteopathic Association Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation to implement a new preclinical curriculum based on patient presentations and adult learning strategies beginning with the entering class of 2016. Below is a description of the new curriculum and why the institution is making this significant change.

WVSOM's new preclinical curriculum is designed to address long standing curricular goals of the faculty by changing the way the content of the curriculum is organized and how the content is to be delivered to students while retaining the best elements of the current traditional systems based curriculum. The decision to change the organization of the curriculum is driven by the emergence of new curricular models that focus on common patient presentations as a better way to integrate basic science and clinical information in the context of physician/patient interactions. The decision to change how the curriculum is delivered to students is driven by the emergence of adult learning strategies that demonstrate better retention and application of information by students to solve patient problems. The WVSOM faculty and academic administration have recognized the need to change the curriculum in order to better address the needs of the students to better serve the patient.

WVSOM's new curricular model is based on the most common ways patients present to a physician. These patient presentations form the basis of the year 1 and 2 curricular structure. The new curriculum will begin with "foundation" courses which will focus the beginning medical student on basic science principles important for understanding the mechanisms of action and treatment strategies that will be presented as part of the patient presentations. Simpler patient presentations will be organized in the first year by organ systems. Second year patient presentations will become progressively more complex, include multisystem presentations and incorporate previous presentations to form a spiral curriculum that reinforces and builds on previous learning. Concurrent with the patient presentations in years 1 and 2 will be Clinical Skills and Osteopathic Principles and Practices (OPP) courses in which students will learn basic skills essential for an osteopathic physician. Throughout the new curriculum the seven osteopathic competencies and clinical reasoning skills will be incorporated as appropriate for the developmental stage of the student.

All of the courses in the new curriculum will use a mix of large and small group curricular delivery methods including traditional lectures and labs, as well as, interactive team based learning and Socratic methods. In addition, standardized patients, robot simulators, electronic medical records and medical informatics will be incorporated as part of the learning experiences provided the student. Scheduled curricular hours will be kept to approximately twenty five hours per week for all curricular activities with the exception of faculty directed assignments. Evaluation and assessment of student learning will occur throughout the curricular continuum to ensure that each student is learning and demonstrating competency as determined by the faculty. Students will receive formative, summative, faculty and peer feedback to assist the student with their strengths and weaknesses, as well as, remediation of deficiencies.