

The Role of Preceptors and Clinical Faculty

The teaching cornerstone of the core rotation is the close relationship between the student and the attending physicians and/or residents who act as preceptors. Many hours per week are spent in small group discussions involving students and their clinical teachers as they make bedside rounds. Together, they discuss the patient's diagnosis, treatment, and progress.

Discussion revolves around a critical review of the patient's history, physical examination findings, imaging studies and laboratory results. The preceptors assess students' medical knowledge, clinical reasoning, clinical and communication skills and professional behavior as well as serve as role models. Related basic science background, critical thinking and problem solving are woven into the discussion of individual cases. The single most important factor that determines the educational value of the clerkship is the quality and quantity of interaction between students, residents, teaching physicians and patients.

Clinical teachers are evaluated by the Clerkship Director, their faculty peers, and students on a regular basis. The basis for student evaluation of faculty is the confidential electronic questionnaire that all students complete at the end of each core clerkship. The hospital DME, SGU Department Chairs and SGU administration have access to the students' responses, which are all confidential.

The basis for senior faculty evaluation is the on-going process required by accreditation agencies, which includes peer review. Informal local knowledge of faculty, although difficult to formalize on occasion, forms an integral part of faculty evaluation. Written reports of site visits by School of Medicine Chairs and Deans add a third level of evaluation.