
Having Med Students in the ER Does Not Slow Care



As part of their training, medical students have become involved in bedside care and this has raised concerns over the possible effect on quality of care. Now, new research from University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine shows that the presence of trainees does not slow care in the emergency department (ED). The results indicate a balance between student educational needs and treatment for patients.

Researchers compared patient length of stay during a required emergency room rotation for medical students and a separate period when medical students were not in the ED. Overall, more than 1.3 million patient cases were evaluated over a period of 15 years at three urban academic hospitals in the United States. The researchers found the total average length of stay was 264.7 minutes, while length of stay was 4.6 minutes longer when students were involved in assessing patients.

"There has been concern that medical students may appreciably increase patient length of stay in the emergency department," said the study's senior author Kevin R. Scott, MD, assistant professor of Clinical Emergency Medicine at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. "But our findings show only a minimal increase, one that is probably imperceptible to most patients and likely clinically insignificant."

The study demonstrates that medical students are afforded excellent educational opportunities in the ED, and can balance this with the desire of both patients and physicians to reduce length of stay, according to Dr. Scott.

"As students, we gradually transition from observing to aiding medical care, but sometimes worry that the additional time we spend with patients may slow care," said the study's lead author Kimon L.H. Ioannides, a fourth year medical school student at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. "This study provides some reassurance that our teachers are able to minimise delays in care for our patients during this transition."

The study, titled "Medical Students in the Emergency Department and Patient Length of Stay", is published in *JAMA*.

Source: [University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine](#)

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