

Evaluation of Project DOCC-Houston at The University of Texas Medical School Houston 2012-2013

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Summary of Findings

During the year 2012-13, Project DOCC Houston conducted a training program for medical residents specializing in pediatrics in an effort to educate these physicians about the needs of children with chronic illnesses and/or developmental disabilities and about the needs of their families. In order to evaluate the success of this training program, Project DOCC-Houston gathered pre- and post-program data from the participating medical residents, as well as data from the parent educators involved. The major findings of the evaluation are summarized below.

Parent Educators' Evaluations of Medical Residents' Interest, Understanding, and Other Elements

Parents rated medical residents' participation in the Project DOCC-Houston program very highly. The overwhelming majority of parent evaluations (100 %) described the residents as attentive. Eighty-six percent indicated that the residents asked questions during the interviews; with ninety-seven percent stating that these questions were asked in a sensitive manner. The overwhelming majority (97%) reported that the residents being evaluated appeared to understand how the parents made decisions for their children with special needs. Ninety-seven percent of the parent evaluations stated that the residents appeared to be open to the "principle of partnering with a parent of a child with a chronic illness or disabilities." Ninety-nine percent of the evaluations indicated that the parent believed that through Project DOCC the residents had gained a better understanding of how the medical system can work for children with special needs.

Comparison of Medical Residents' Pre- and Post-Program Data

It is clear that the overwhelming majority of medical residents who took part in the Project DOCC-Houston 2012-13 program believed that they benefited from the program. Comparison of medical residents' pre- and post-program data shows highly statistically significant change in the direction intended by Project DOCC in the residents' perceptions of their:

- * experience with, and knowledge about, the at home care of children with chronic illness and/or disability.
- * understanding of the long-term impact that a child's chronic illness or disability has upon the entire family.

Comparison of Medical Residents' Pre- and Post-Program Data DOCC at UTMSH cont.

- * familiarity with, and understanding of, the stages of grief experienced by families with a child with chronic illness or disability.
- * familiarity with, and understanding of, the coping mechanisms used by families of children with chronic illness or disability.
- * ability to assist a parent who is “burned out” by the care of a child with a chronic illness or disability.
- * familiarity with community resources available to help support parents of children with chronic illnesses or disabilities.

After participating in Project DOCC, medical residents were also more likely to believe that parents of children with chronic illness or disability should have an active and equal role with physicians in making all decisions related to their child’s care.

Medical Residents' Evaluation of Project DOCC

All of the residents who completed evaluation forms (100 %) rated the parent educators highly.

Twenty-two of the twenty-five participating residents who completed evaluation forms (93 %) also indicated that Project DOCC has made them more willing to work with children with chronic disabilities and their families.

Residents were also asked about how the training components of Project DOCC changed their approach to a patient and the patient’s family. Analysis of the written comments regarding the impact of the program revealed two common themes:

1. Increased understanding/empathy of the psychosocial impact of chronic illness
2. Importance of communication and support

Examples of the comments included:

“Project DOCC helped me better understand different aspects of what a family with a child with chronic care issues has to deal with and manage from a home perspective. It definitely should affect the way we practice medicine and as doctors, we need to consider what type of home life these patients are going home to. I will definitely be more aware of this and think more about how the family will have to cope with a diagnosis or management when making decisions about a patient.”

“Project DOCC has definitely changed the way I look at families with chronic needs. It was very enlightening to hear the challenges families face when trying resources for their children.”

Medical Residents' Evaluation of Project DOCC at UTMSH cont.

“It gives more of a personal aspect to patients and their families. Often all we see are the medical challenges but it was good to hear about the variety of other challenges these families face.”

“Hearing the parents' feedback and what they like and value in physicians after dealing with so many of them is helpful on how to approach these parents and their kids in order to work with the parents as a team or how to get them to like/trust you more and open up.”

“The Project DOCC sessions gave me new perspective on chronic care kids and their families. All pediatric residents should go through these sessions. Great experience!”