Medical Student Portfolios: Their Value and What You Need for Successful Implementation

Student portfolios are useful for displaying assessment evidence, enabling longitudinal tracking, and documenting student achievement. With appropriate support and coaching, online portfolios can foster student skills in self-assessment and ongoing professional development. Electronic portfolios may be integrated into the curriculum as part of a program of assessment that involves both student assessment and assessment of the educational program. The goals of individual student and programmatic portfolios are to facilitate student learning and assess progress.

**Roles**
In undergraduate medical education, a portfolio ...

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<tr>
<th>Houses assessments</th>
<th>Supports feedback</th>
<th>Contributes to career guidance</th>
<th>Facilitates quality improvement</th>
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<td>Includes assessment artifacts (formative &amp; summative)</td>
<td>Encourages self-reflection and identification of individual gaps</td>
<td>Documents achievement of benchmarks of performance</td>
<td>Identifies content gaps in curriculum</td>
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<td>Tracks progress</td>
<td>Contextualizes input from coaches</td>
<td>Demonstrates competence with skills needed for chosen residency</td>
<td>Demonstrates achievement of curricular goals by individuals and across the curriculum</td>
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<td>Provides evidence of achievement</td>
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**Challenges**
Successful implementation requires early consideration of potential challenges. Essential first steps in the development of an electronic portfolio system for an undergraduate medical education program include ensuring buy-in of stakeholders and recruitment of coaches who are vital to the system, addressing technology issues, and clarifying the intended purpose and expected processes.

**Needed Resources**
Creating a quality electronic student portfolio requires significant resources including stakeholder buy-in, dedication of time and effort from those developing the portfolio program, and technology and staff support to develop and maintain the system. Of course, all of these individuals and the information technology (IT) itself require a commitment of funding.

**Enhancing the Portfolio Experience with Coaches**
Coaches can serve as interpreters, helping the student review and understand performance feedback. The novice student may struggle to accept critical feedback and/or to fully comprehend its relevance to future duties. Coaches can provide examples and insights that serve to validate and prioritize feedback, help students translate feedback into an action plan, and guide learners in establishing SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) goals.

References:

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