Title: Defining competencies and objectives of student research program in undergraduate medical program, Jimma University

Author: Solomon Worku Beza, M.D., M.P.H.

Context and setting: Community Based Education (CBE) is a means of achieving educational relevance to community needs. Jimma University has introduced this innovative curricula right from its inception and has been implementing it for over two decades. The student research program (SRP) is one of the strategies of CBE designed to enable students to carry out an operational research so that they develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Why the idea was necessary: The first step in creating a high-quality course is to define competency and educational objectives so as to select appropriate teaching techniques, creating learning activities, and choosing assessment methods. Despite having the course SRP being delivered over two decades at the college of medical sciences at Jimma University, it has never had clearly defined course competencies and objectives. Hence, this project aims at developing the course competencies and objectives so as to enhance the learning process which results in improving students' research competency which in turn contributes to scholarship in public health research.

What was done: A curriculum design and development model which is developed by JHPIEGO was used. Based on the model, the following steps were taken to come up with the course competencies and objectives. First, the required competencies of the academic program and the competencies for the academic year were reviewed; second, the course competencies were determined; third, the course objectives that help to develop those competencies were defined; and fourth, the draft list of objectives were sent out to past and present faculty who were (are) involved in CBE and SRP for inputs.

Evaluation of results and impact: The core competencies of the academic program and academic year were drawn from the national and Jimma's medical curriculum. The course competencies are directly adapted from an article "defining generic objectives for community-based education in undergraduate medical programs" and "global minimum essential requirements" (GMER) developed by IIME Core Committee. The main and supportive objectives are adapted from "Student's Performance Evaluation Format in SRP" in the SRP manual of JU and a paper on "Core Competencies in Clinical and Translational Research." Certain main objectives were drawn from the generic objectives for community based education. Six main objectives describing when to demonstrate, who demonstrates, and what is demonstrated were defined to develop the required competencies. For each main course objectives, 3–15 supporting objectives of knowledge, skill, and attitude domains written in specific action, simple to complex and in performance order or hierarchy of learning based on Miller's desired competency level were formulated. Expert inputs and feedbacks were accommodated.

Next, a course syllabus containing the course main and supporting objectives will be designed and incorporated into the SRP manual and then into the curriculum during next revision.

Correspondence: Dr. Solomon Worku Beza, Jimma University, College of Medical and Public Health Sciences, Jimma, Ethiopia. P.O.B 378 Tel: + 251917801709. E-mail: solomonwb@gmail.com