

**Podcast Episode**

Using Podcasting to Engage Students in Substance Use Disorder and Public Health Education

**Host / Moderator**

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**Episode Overview**

Highlight podcasting as an innovative educational strategy in health professions education, using *The Regimen* as an example to explore how student-faculty collaboration can support learning, professional identity formation, and engagement with substance use disorder (SUD) and other public health topics.

**Learning Objective**

- Describe how podcasting can be used to engage learners in substance use disorder and public health education.
- Explain the role of student-faculty collaboration in developing and sustaining a podcast.
- Identify how podcasting supports student learning, communication skills, and professional development.
- Apply practical considerations for incorporating podcasting or similar approaches into health professions education.

**Orienting Listeners to Why This Topic Matters****Briefly tell us why this topic matters?**

- Learners need opportunities to engage with real-world topics such as substance use disorder (SUD), to communicate with broader audiences, and develop their professional voice and identity.
- Podcasting allows learners to learn and teach simultaneously, while engaging with current, evolving topics in SUD.

**Can you tell us about the podcast you engage students with, *The Regimen*?**

- *The Regimen* is where public health pharmacists, pharmacy students, and guests discuss the latest public health issues and solutions. The goals are to improve population health and patient care through education.

**Providing Context for the Podcast's Development and Educational Purpose****What gap or need were you trying to address by developing the podcast?**

- Educational activities often lack real-world application, even during experiential clinical learning. Patient case or topic discussions can help learner's development, though they are rarely interprofessional and can be fleeting.
- Student reflections on webinars, classes, and policy meetings on topics of public health importance are helpful in learner development. I wanted to integrate student interests, organizational skills, writing, speaking, health literacy "translation," and marketing and evaluation into one weekly activity – the podcast.

**Explain how you started hosting the podcast.**

- In January of 2021, my elective public health advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE) was being offered remotely. A student on this rotation at the time suggested we start a podcast to connect and educate listeners during an intense time of distancing and public health interest.
- We very quickly designed a logo, a musical intro, and identified a platform (Spotify), and created social media accounts to promote our episodes – all without cost!
- We used and optimized our university Zoom accounts to record episodes and used various audio editing software to finalize the episodes.

**How did students become involved from the beginning and how many students are typically involved in a given semester or year?**

- I had between 6-8 students per year who participated in my public health APPE rotation, and everyone had a great interest in educating via podcasting.
- As a result, I had my public health elective classes begin recording podcasts, which generated interest in the medium among the student body, and led to increased interest in my public health APPE.

**What does a typical episode look like and what role do students play in creating it?**

- It's changed throughout the five years we have been hosting it. We evolved from creating longer episodes to then developing "STAT regimen" (shorter episodes) that highlighted of-the-moment topics with faculty guests and other invited speakers.
- Through student feedback, we later included a "cold open" teaser, some rapid-fire questions at the end of each episode.
- Students select all topics, find and invite and schedule speakers, research the topic, pre-meet, draft and edit a script, record the podcast, edit it, thank the guests, create the promotional material, schedule posting of social media (with key subjects/people tagged), schedule the order of episodes (usually along a theme, we've had parts 1 and 2 to divide up longer episodes) and evaluate reach.

**Translating Substance Use Disorder Topics Into Accessible Public Health Education**

**You've covered a wide range of substance-use related topics on *The Regimen*, from fentanyl to naloxone to buprenorphine access and emerging treatments. How do you decide which topics to feature?**

- Students enroll in this APPE know that podcast development is a central component of the experience, and I intentionally guide topic selection toward public health priorities, particularly SUD and addiction-related care. Many students have also completed my opioid use disorder elective course prior to participating in the APPE, which often sparks interest in topics such as naloxone vending machines, drug checking, pharmacist involvement in buprenorphine access, and community naloxone distribution, etc.
- Students are encouraged to engage with emerging literature, webinars, and statewide meetings related to SUD and public health. These experiences frequently shape episode development and allow students to translate current evidence into accessible educational content for broader audiences.
- At the start of each APPE, we typically plan 6-10 episodes to accommodate guest speaker schedules and align topics to a seasonal theme. I encourage students to connect episodes around related SUD or public health topics so that listeners can build knowledge over time, rather than engage with isolated "one-off" episodes.
- Students also bring personal interests and lived experiences into the process, often selecting topics connected to disease states or health issues that have affected themselves, friends, or family members. These conversations are consistently framed through a public health and pharmacist-care perspective, with an emphasis on evidence-based education and accessible communication.

**What does the process look like for students when preparing for an episode about a complex or evolving topic like opioid use disorder (OUD)?**

- Preparing an episode on a topic like OUD requires students to engage with a wide range of information sources, similar to any other APPE rotation. Students review primary literature, policy updates, media coverage, social media discussions, and existing podcasts to better understand both the evidence base and the public health conversation surrounding the topic.
- Students are encouraged to critically evaluate information, identify key educational takeaways, and develop thoughtful interview questions and discussion prompts. A major focus of the process is translating complex clinical concepts into language that is accurate, accessible, and engaging for an educated, non-specialist audience while minimizing jargon and stigma.
- I work closely with students to strengthen evidence base of the episode, clarify messaging, simplify overly technical language, and improve the overall flow of the discussion. Over time, students learn to shift from heavily scripted content toward more conversational, audience-focused communication strategies.

**When students are working on podcast episodes about SUD, how does their engagement or approach compare to what you see in more traditional classroom settings?**

- Why educate one person when you can educate anyone who listens? Podcasts allow interaction through social media, comments, and the ability to track listens. Podcasts are for anyone – their loved ones, the greater public, and peers – and are uniquely accessible, flexible, and can feel both high- and low-stakes, including the possibility that an episode could go viral.
- Traditional classrooms, including case discussions, lack the interactivity with the professor and peers that podcasting provides.
- It's the jump from learn it, see it, do it, teach it – to learn and teach in the same week.

**Implementation and Key Takeaways**

**For educators interested in using podcasting or similar approaches, where should they start?**

- It's helpful to start with accessible, low-cost tools. In many cases, students already have familiarity with basic audio and video editing platforms, which reduces the need for extensive technical instruction.
- Have a bulleted script, not word for word. A structured but flexible scripting approach can support episode development and preserve a conversational format.
- Think of this as a 20-minute talk, but instead of 5 minutes of Q/A, it's 2 minutes of talking maximum, and mainly asking questions.
- Make sure students own the entire process – from topic selection to research, scripting, inviting guests, editing, and posting. The best part is hearing students' voices in my car like any other podcast.

**What are some of the biggest barriers, whether it's time, funding, or logistics, that might prevent someone from starting a podcast like this? How have you navigated those?**

- Maintaining consistency over time.
- Staying topical and relevant as content evolves.
- Audience – there are 2 million podcasts, so adding one needs to focus primarily on making learning real and relevant, rather than on selling ads or promoting a university or institution.
- Student-centered curiosity and passion must come first; this requires flexibility with timing, recording, and editing. Time passes quickly!

**What is one piece of advice you would give to someone trying this for the first time?**

- Listen to a wide range of podcasts on science communication – the strong examples, the weaker formats (e.g., lecture-style delivery) – and focus on being passionately persuasive rather than simply a deliverer of facts. Emotion over logic can improve relatability and audience engagement.

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