

Common critiques of education research concept papers

We are thrilled by the response to the recently issued RFP for Research on Educational Interventions for Health Care Professionals. One hundred four concept papers were received and 18 have been approved for submission as full proposals.

Some of the concept papers would be more appropriate for a regular investigator initiated research submission to the HSR&D Service than for this specific education research RFP.

Although we are unable to provide specific feedback on every concept paper that was not approved, we did see common themes in the critiques:

- There was no research proposed (e.g. the project was only to develop and implement a curriculum, intervention or model)
- The research proposed was beyond the intersection of education research with health services research
- The proposed project was program evaluation rather than research (i.e.: theory driven). While not every research design requires a hypothesis, generating and/or testing theory is a distinguishing and central feature of research
- The role of patient outcomes in this RFP is to validate the effect of education. In this way, this RFP differs from more traditional HSR&D or clinical research in which the outcomes themselves are the 'golden ring'. With that framework in mind:
 - The proposal was focused on specific content for a specific condition and was, therefore, too narrow to advance our understanding of the practice and process of education
 - The proposal lost the forest for the trees...i.e. the topic may be important- for example, any of the high frequency diagnoses in VA (DM, HTN, CHF, etc.), but the study is only mildly innovative, at best, for educational theory and research
- The research team lacked key expertise, e.g.: education research (which is not the same as an expert clinical educator and is not the same as general HSR&D research expertise), appropriate clinical disciplines, IT, health economics, methodologies, or other important expertise
- The proposal demonstrated a lack awareness of key concepts, theories, or literature
- The proposal had serious design flaws, e.g.: the same individual will develop, implement and evaluate an educational intervention
- There was lack of attention to the chain of impact on patient outcomes and how this relates to the education intervention proposed