Understanding the Milestones
An Overview for Emergency Medicine Residents

David Diller, Jordana Haber, Jonathan Heidt, Gloria Kuhn, Gillian Schmitz

What are the milestones?
The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) introduced the milestones as a means to track progress and skill acquisition in residency training. The milestones describe a developmental progression of observable behaviors within a set of previously described core competencies. Residency programs can use the milestones to provide more specific feedback and evaluation to residents, ensuring that they acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes for advancement within their programs entrance into independent practice. The ACGME would use program performance on the milestones for accreditation decisions.

Where did they come from?
In 2002, the ACGME changed its emphasis on evaluating training programs from their potential to educate residents, to actual accomplishments and assessment of outcomes. Initially, the ACGME focused on a model of six core competencies to frame the development of a physician from novice to master. These domains included: Patient Care, Medical Knowledge, Professionalism, System Based Practice, Practice Based Learning and Improvement, and Interpersonal/Communication Skills. The milestones were developed to help the medical education community provide a specific framework for evaluation and assessment within these domains.

What does all this mean to me?
First, residency programs will remain accredited for longer periods of time and program requirements will be less subject to change. Residents will still be required to evaluate the effectiveness of their program through annual questionnaires, but faculty will be required to continuously evaluate residents through periodic progress reports to the Residency Review Committee (RRC). Finally, program directors will be expected to report institutional data annually to the RRC and the ACGME, providing these agencies with longitudinal data; thus making it easier to track program performance while ensuring educational outcomes meet expectations.

Evaluation
The judgment of an assessment being made. The goal should be to foster future learning by providing direction as well as motivation. This process involves participation of both the trainer and learner, as the learners’ perception of the evaluation process will be highly influenced if the feedback they receive will facilitate learning or not.

Assessment
The gathering of data on performance. This can take two forms: formative or summative. The goal of formative assessment is to provide direct feedback from observations. The goal of summative assessment is to gather data points to be used at the end of a time period.

Feedback
A technique used in medical education to help develop and improve clinical skills. Effective feedback is timely, expected, focused, and based on first-hand interactions. The goal is to observe and analyze learner behavior, and then give information back to the learner to improve their future practice.
There are currently 23 sub-competencies that residents are evaluated on. Each of these sub-competencies is broken down into 5 proficiency levels from Level 1 (Novice) to Level 5 (Expert). The milestones are the actions or skills that define each level. Residents are required to reach Level 4 in most sub-competencies in order to graduate.

### Why are the milestones important?

A program director is required to review his or her residents at least twice a year and report their progress in acquiring key skills and knowledge to practice clinical medicine. Milestones help to provide residents with specific feedback on what they are doing well and what they need to work on to graduate and reach proficiency. It is not a comprehensive list, however. Milestones provide a basic framework for feedback and semi-annual evaluations.

### How do the milestones help me learn better?

Residents are encouraged to learn by reading, studying, and taking good care of patients. Residency programs are encouraged to innovate and use new approaches to teach and reinforce the skills needed to practice emergency medicine. The milestones are simply a way of measuring if what you are doing is working. They provide some feedback and objective assessment of your strengths and weaknesses and help guide self-improvement, continued growth, and identify targeted needs for your professional development.

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