Meeting Students Where They Are: Educating Students with Varying Life Experiences About the Health Care Needs of Persons with Disabilities

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Meeting Students Where They Are: Educating Students with Varying Life Experiences About the Health Care Needs of Persons with Disabilities

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Background and objectives: The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a single day Interclerkship in teaching medical students about the health care needs of persons with disabilities. A written curriculum was developed, and the impact of the Interclerkship on student learning was assessed.

Methods: Students met with individuals with physical or cognitive disabilities in their personal lives or completed pre- and post-Interclerkship self-assessments that rated their comfort level in working with people with disabilities, using a 5-point Likert scale. Student feedback was also collected. Results: A total of 50 students completed the Interclerkship, including 26 with previous experience with disabilities. A trend toward greater improvement among students reporting no previous experience with disabilities was observed. Conclusions: A single day Interclerkship improved the attitudes of students toward people with disabilities and rated levels of all types of disability experience.

Conclusion: Students self-assessment of their attitudes, knowledge, and skills changed significantly (p < 0.001) across time, post-test regardless of their prior level of disability experience type.

Positive Outcomes and Strong Student Feedback

This single-day Interclerkship improved third year medical student attitudes, knowledge, and skills (p < 0.001). A total of 43 students participated, providing appropriate medical care for disabled patients. 89% of participating students agreed that this Interclerkship provided new skills and knowledge. 97% of students reported that this topic was essential to their training, and 97% agreed that this topic is essential to their training. Students offered many favorable comments about the experience, excerpted below:

"This single day Interclerkship was very beneficial for all students." "This allowed me to learn about people with disabilities who may experience when they seek medical care." "I now have a greater awareness of how to work with people with disabilities." "I am aware of how my own experiences and beliefs about people with disabilities affect my work with people in the community." "I am aware of the challenges that people with disabilities may experience when they seek medical care."

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the individuals and their families who provided these experiences: please contact the authors if you or a close friend or relative who share these stories would like to share their story within this Interclerkship. We are grateful to the many faculty and medical students who provided these opportunities.

Methods

Students participated in lectures and small group workshops during this one day Interclerkship. Students participated in activities designed to facilitate knowledge and skills in areas beyond health care: working with people with disabilities in areas beyond health care. Student feedback was also collected. Results: Overall, students provided favorable feedback. Conclusions: A single day Interclerkship improved the attitudes of students toward people with disabilities and rated levels of all types of disability experience.

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