Teaching Conflict Resolution Techniques to Fourth-Year Medical Students in a Physiatry Clerkship using Standardized Professionals – A Pilot Study

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OBJECTIVES

- Conflicts are a common occurrence in the medical workplace and are associated with medical errors and higher ratings of personal stress.¹
- Objective structured clinical exams (OSCE) have been utilized to assess students’ interpersonal skills utilizing the standardized patient model.²
- However, utilization of a standardized professional (S-Pro) model to assess medical students’ conflict management skills in the context of an interprofessional team has not been previously reported.

DESIGN

- Institutional review board approval was granted.
- Fourth-year medical students in a PM&R clerkship attended a didactic lecture regarding evidence-based conflict resolution techniques from Team STEPPS®.
- The D-E-S-C method was presented to the students:
  - Describe the specific situation
  - Express your concerns about the action
  - Suggest other alternatives
  - Consequences should be stated
- The students were presented with a conflict scenario in a short film to resolve with a S-Pro in ten minutes.
- Students completed a survey before and after the intervention regarding their perceived ability to manage a conflict.

RESULTS

The OSCE was a realistic conflict scenario
The OSCE was a valuable experience
I feel more confident in handling conflict after applying the D-E-S-C method to the OSCE
My ability to effectively manage conflict is an important skill for me as a future physician
Working with an S-Pro is an effective way to practice interprofessional skills
This session improved my ability to deal with conflict

Table 1. Survey of self-perceived confidence taken at the beginning and end of the session. Percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed to the following statements. Pre-clerkship, n=34, post-clerkship, n=25.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Pre-clerkship N=34</th>
<th>Post-clerkship N=25</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ability to resolve a conflict with a medical student</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Ability to resolve a conflict with a practicing non-physician provider</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>95%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Ability to resolve a conflict with a resident physician</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Ability to resolve a conflict with an attending physician</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Ability to resolve a conflict with a patient</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Survey of students taken at the beginning and end of the session. Percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed to the following statements. Pre-clerkship, n=34, post-clerkship, n=25.

CONCLUSION

- The pre-survey and post-survey were completed by 34 and 25 students, respectively.
- 85% of students reported that they have observed conflict in the healthcare setting and 96% of students agreed that the ability to manage conflict is an important skill for future physicians.
- It was reported that the session improved the students’ ability to deal with conflict by 96% of the students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Clint Faulk MD, Daniel Moore MD, Stephen Peirce MD, Sudeep Mehta MD, and the standardized professionals of the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) of Greenville, NC

REFERENCES