Patient Education in the Pre-Clinical Years of Medical School: A Pilot Study

Allison Connelly, PT, Stephen Charles, MABMH, PhD, CHSE

RATIONALE/NEED

- Medical students are provided with limited opportunities to practice performing patient education during the pre-clinical years of their education. They have many opportunities to practice patient interviews and physical examinations with standardized patients, but there is limited focus on allowing the students to practice educating their patients in language that said patients can understand. The goal of this study is to focus specifically on patient education with the assistance of persons from a specific patient population as opposed to standardized patients.

METHODOLOGY

- Students were provided with a short power point presentation on autonomic dysreflexia prior to initiating this exercise.
- Eight students performed patient education on autonomic dysreflexia with an individual from the community with a spinal cord injury and receive feedback from this individual. Community volunteers were instructed to provide feedback to the students based on their own experiences, no formal training was given.
- Students completed a short survey on the experience using a 7-point Likert scale to determine if this experience was helpful to them and if it improved their comfort level with patient interaction and education.
- There was a follow up survey to all second year medical students upon completion of their core clinical rotations to assess students’ level of comfort with patient interaction and education.

RESULTS

- Results from the first phase of the study were completed in January of 2018. All participants either agreed or were in strong agreement that the exercise was helpful to them as a medical student and that they would like to see this kind of activity implemented into the medical curriculum. During the debriefing sessions following the exercise, 87% of the participants stated that their interactions with the community volunteers were much more informative than their experiences with standardized patients.
- The follow up survey to the entire class of 2020 revealed no significant difference between participants and non-participants in level of comfort with patient interaction and education.

IMPACT/LESSONS LEARNED

- It is the hope of the authors that this exercise will illustrate the need for increased exposure to and practice of performing patient education during the pre-clinical years of medical school. The authors believe that to implement such activities into the medical school curriculum will result in improved medical student performance and interaction with patients during the clinical years, and will set a precedent for continued quality patient education as these students become physicians.

STUDY POPULATION

- Second year medical students at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University

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SOURCES

4: www.scinurse.org