ABSTRACT

Women Leading Health Change (WLHC) is a student-led organization at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine that strives to promote healthcare self-advocacy amongst vulnerable populations in Cincinnati, Ohio. WLHC implements student-created women’s and mental health educational curricula to provide members of the Cincinnati community with the resources and knowledge necessary to navigate a daunting healthcare system. Throughout its nine-year history, WLHC has expanded its educational curriculum to four different sites within Cincinnati (OP the Streets, First Step Home, Bethany House Services, and Women’s Recovery Pod at Hamilton County Jail). Since 2011, WLHC has worked to achieve three measurable goals: 1. Demonstrate program efficacy through short- and long-term retention of relevant health knowledge by participants; 2. Enhance the sense of participant self-advocacy in navigating the healthcare system; 3. Develop medical students’ comprehension and empathy for vulnerable patient populations.

RESULTS

As summarized in Figures 1 and 2, WLHC successfully taught eight sets of 11-week classes to 32 medical students. Using pre/post-test surveys, the study measured the impact of the WLHC curriculum on medical student perspectives and knowledge. Class participants demonstrated statistically significant improvement in knowledge retention, as assessed by their post-test scores after each class. In eight out of ten classes, class participants showed statistically significant development of medical student empathy. Figure 3 is a bar graph illustrating the average scores of medical students who demonstrated significant improvement in self-advocacy and understanding the healthcare system. Medical students showed statistically significant growth in perspective and knowledge retention, as assessed by their post-test scores after each class session (Figure 2).

CONCLUSIONS

Curriculum knowledge: • In eight out of ten classes, class participants showed statistically significant knowledge retention, as assessed by their post-test scores after each session (Figure 2). • Limitations included fluctuations in weekly attendance and participant graduation from their respective programs.

Self-Advocacy and Understanding the Healthcare System • Class participants demonstrated statistically significant improvement in medical understanding, confidence, and self-advocacy in navigating the healthcare system (Figure 3).

Development of Medical Student Empathy • Medical students showed statistically significant growth in perspective and satisfaction when working with this vulnerable patient population (Figure 4).