

Women Leading Healthy Change: Promoting Self-Advocacy in a Daunting Healthcare System

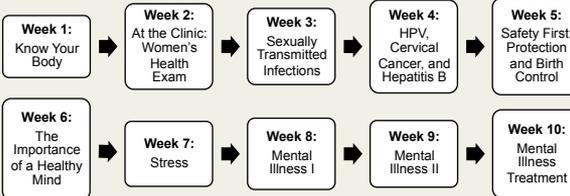
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ABSTRACT

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 (*Off 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 this vulnerable patient population.

METHODS

- A total of eight sets of 11-week classes were taught by 32 medical students
- Each course consisted of 5 weeks of **women's health** education and 5 weeks of **mental health** education. The final week was an open forum for feedback and suggestions from the class participants
- Class participants completed surveys during the first class and again in subsequent weeks to collect demographic information and assess their confidence, comfort, and ability to navigate the healthcare system
- Class participants completed and pre-test and post-test to measure retention of the material presented
- Medical students completed a survey before and after teaching the curriculum to assess their perspectives related to treating this vulnerable patient population



RESULTS

Race	
White / Caucasian	65.77%
Black / African American	29.41%
Mixed Race / Other	4.81%

Education	
No / Some High School	28.49%
Completed High School / GED	36.60%
Beyond High School	34.94%

Age	
Mean	34.4
Range	14.5 to 59

Encounters with a healthcare provider in previous 6 months	
Mean	4.42
Range	0 to 30

Length of stay at facility	
Mean	4.9 weeks
Range	1 day to 52 weeks

Figure 1: Participant demographic information and data about medical visits; collected on first day of course (N=187).

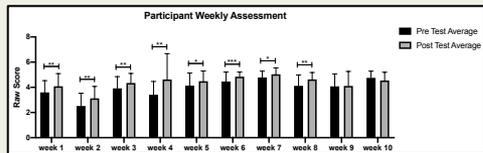


Figure 2: Comparison of true/false quizzes before and after each class; reported as raw scores with a maximum score of 5.

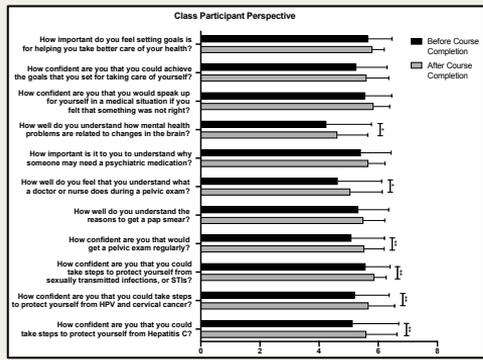


Figure 3: Select questions from surveys administered at each participant's first class, then reassessed in later sessions to assess for change. Questions were presented in Likert-scale format (1-6, "6" meaning "Very Confident", "Very Comfortable", etc.) N = 187.

* P ≤ 0.05
** P ≤ 0.01
*** P ≤ 0.001

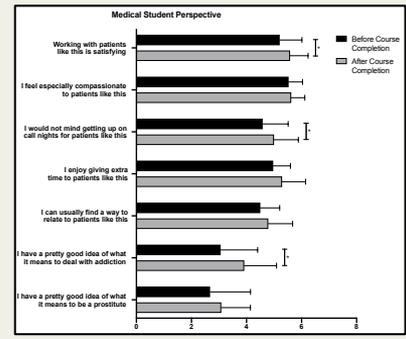


Figure 4: 32 first-year medical students were given questionnaires prior to beginning their teaching responsibilities, and upon completion of the program. Questions were presented in Likert-scale format (1-6, "1" meaning "Strongly Disagree" and "6" meaning "Strongly Agree").

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).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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