

Enhancing medical student clinical knowledge and communication skills in the care of LGBTQ patients

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Background: Insufficient access to clinically and culturally appropriate care for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) patients perpetuates healthcare disparities for this population. In academic year 2020-2021, we offered an innovative approach to medical education on LGBTQ health using a multidisciplinary, virtual format for second-year students.

Methods: The 7 hours of educational activities included a recorded lecture, Zoom live lectures, a Zoom small group communication skills practice session, a Zoom multidisciplinary panel discussion involving clinicians and public health experts, and a second panel of transgender patients. Assessment consisted of an open-content quiz with a short essay question. Students completed an anonymous post-activity survey in which they evaluated their satisfaction with each of the educational components, and their confidence in achieving the learning objectives, on a 5-point Likert scale. They provided written feedback on the strengths and suggested improvements for the activities.

Results: 177 students participated in the activities, and 109 (62%) completed the voluntary survey. Each of the components was rated highly with respect to learner satisfaction, with means of 4.31 to 4.39. Students also reported high confidence in achieving the stated learning objectives (means 4.12 to 4.21). Written feedback highlighted the rich and insightful panel discussions, the quality of the lectures, and the opportunity to have small group discussions. Suggested improvements included adding content on how to navigate patients' and providers' religious beliefs, and extending education on LGBTQ health through the clinical years.

Conclusion: Our results demonstrate that a combination of didactics, small groups, and interactive panels in a virtual format can lead to high confidence among medical students in achieving key learning objectives related to LGBTQ healthcare. Additional research is needed to determine the long-term outcomes of this and similar educational activities in mitigating health disparities for the LGBTQ population.