

Empathy enhancement programs and mindfulness-based practices may reduce care practitioners' burnout and stress while increasing satisfaction, caring efficacy, and well-being. No study has been conducted to measure the effectiveness of a simulation-based empathy enhancement program combined with mindfulness practice on professionals working with older adults living alone. This study, therefore, assessed the effectiveness of a simulation-based empathy enhancement program with a brief mindfulness practice session on social workers working with older adults living alone. This study was a quasi-experimental study involving 105 social workers in South Korea. The experimental group received a simulation-based empathy enhancement program with mindfulness practice, and the attention control group watched a 30-minute-long educational video about empathy. Data were collected prior to the intervention and at two weeks after the intervention using self-reported questionnaires measuring empathy, caring efficacy, psychosocial stress, compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. The experimental group had significantly lower levels of psychosocial stress compared to the attention control group. Both groups showed significant improvements in empathy but in different empathy measures. Also, the experimental group only showed significantly lower levels of burnout and secondary traumatic stress after the intervention while the attention control group only showed significant improvements in compassion satisfaction and caring efficacy. Although between-group differences were found in psychosocial stress only, pre-and post-test differences in different outcome measures from experimental and attention control groups indicate limited but possible effectiveness of each of the empathy enhancement programs on people in caring professionals.

EMPOWERING OLDER ADULTS IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS: COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING FOR SURGICAL RESIDENTS

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Older adults often perceive themselves as stigmatized and powerless in healthcare settings. Communication with them is complicated by age-related issues and negative stereotypes about older adults and aging. It is therefore vital for physicians and surgeons, who encounter the most vulnerable elderly, to communicate successfully with this population, who wish to maintain quality and dignity in their lives. Successful patient communication leads to better recall of information, compliance, adherence to medications, satisfaction, and overall better outcomes. We developed a two-part training program comprised of small group interactive didactic sessions on aging issues with third year surgical residents, and workshop demonstrations given by the residents to a group of older adults, followed by a question and answer session. Residents were assessed using a 22-item pre-post questionnaire covering medical knowledge of aging, attitudes toward older adults, and personal anxiety about aging. Since its inception, the program has reached 88 residents and 711

older adults. For residents, knowledge scores ($p \leq 0.001$), six of nine attitude items ($p \leq 0.01$) and one of four anxiety items ($p \leq 0.001$) improved significantly. This is notable as well since attitudes and anxiety levels are attributes that are deep-seated and hard to change. For older adults, post surveys showed that 96% strongly agreed/agreed that residents had demonstrated sensitivity toward them and 96% were very satisfied/satisfied with the program. Our replicable, low-cost program enables residents to learn and realistically practice universal underlying communication skills in order to maintain effective and sensitive communication with this vulnerable population.

SESSION 1370 (POSTER)

INNOVATIONS IN CLINICAL GERIATRICS EDUCATION

HOW TO PREPARE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS FOR THE CARE OF OLDER ADULTS? PARTNER WITH GERONTOLOGY

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Approximately 80% of older adults have chronic illness which requires complex care. Primary care providers require special training to improve the care they provide older adults. As primary care shortages increase, and the older adult population swells, physician assistants (PA) will increasingly be relied upon to provide care and advocacy for older adults. The purpose of this presentation is to describe the development of a dual degree program that facilitates enhanced gerontological training for students pursuing a Masters of PA Studies degree. The Gerontology Interdisciplinary Program and the PA Program at the University of Utah collaborated to assess program objectives, competencies, and coursework, while identifying student interest in this dual MS venture. Students were interested in increasing their skills to meet the growing need for geriatric care while also saving time and money. In addition, it was important that the combined program of study did not overburden students and accommodated participants off-site. Faculty and administrative buy-in was sought from within departments and colleges. Revisions to the proposed program of study included altering course offerings, changing program start dates, and removing course overlap. A 30-month dual MS was developed that incorporates 87 PA Program credits, 25 Gerontology Credits, and 6 credits shared through practicum, geriatric content, and evidence based practice. Students who graduate will complete a Gerontology focused Masters Project that combines their work from the two programs. This dual MS program prepares students to be competitive in the job market, while also targeting an area of need in primary care.

VIRTUAL REALITY MEDICAL EDUCATION PROJECT ENHANCES EMPATHY

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