Positive impact of self-disclosure on attitudes to mental health among physician assistant students: a prospective study using synchronous videoconferencing

Stigmatized views about mental health decreased, and help-seeking behaviors improved, after PA students were exposed to self-disclosure of lived experience by senior faculty.

Objective
- We empirically tested the hypothesis that Physician Assistant [PA] students can benefit from the availability of, and exposure to, senior PAs with self-disclosed histories of having overcome mental illness.¹

Methods
- First-year PA students from 5 programs participated (n = 167) at baseline.
- Students took part in an optional intervention consisting of senior PA faculty disclosing personal histories of mental illness and vulnerability, followed by facilitated discussion (n = 37).
- Unexposed students served as controls (n = 75) at endpoint.

Results
- The intervention resulted in significant improvement on the Self-Stigma of Seeking Help² (SSOSH, = 0.006) and the Opening Minds to Stigma³ (OMS-HC, p = 0.002) scales.
- Change in the OMS-HC was driven by the disclosure / help-seeking (p = 0.02) and social distance (p = 0.003) subscales.
- The control group had no commensurate changes.

Discussion
- Self-disclosure by senior PAs and peers is an effective positive anti-stigma intervention for PA students.
- A candid, intimate and confidential virtual learning space was feasible through synchronized videoconferencing.

References

Yale SCHOOL OF MEDICINE Teaching and Learning Center

Wellbeing PArtners

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