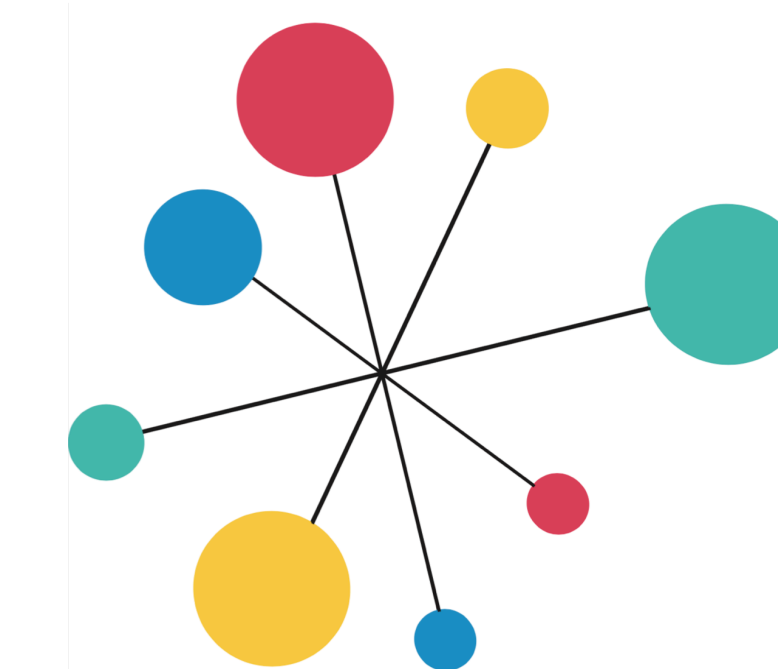


Positive impact of self-disclosure on attitudes to mental health among physician assistant students: a prospective study using synchronous videoconferencing



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, $p = 0.006$) 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.

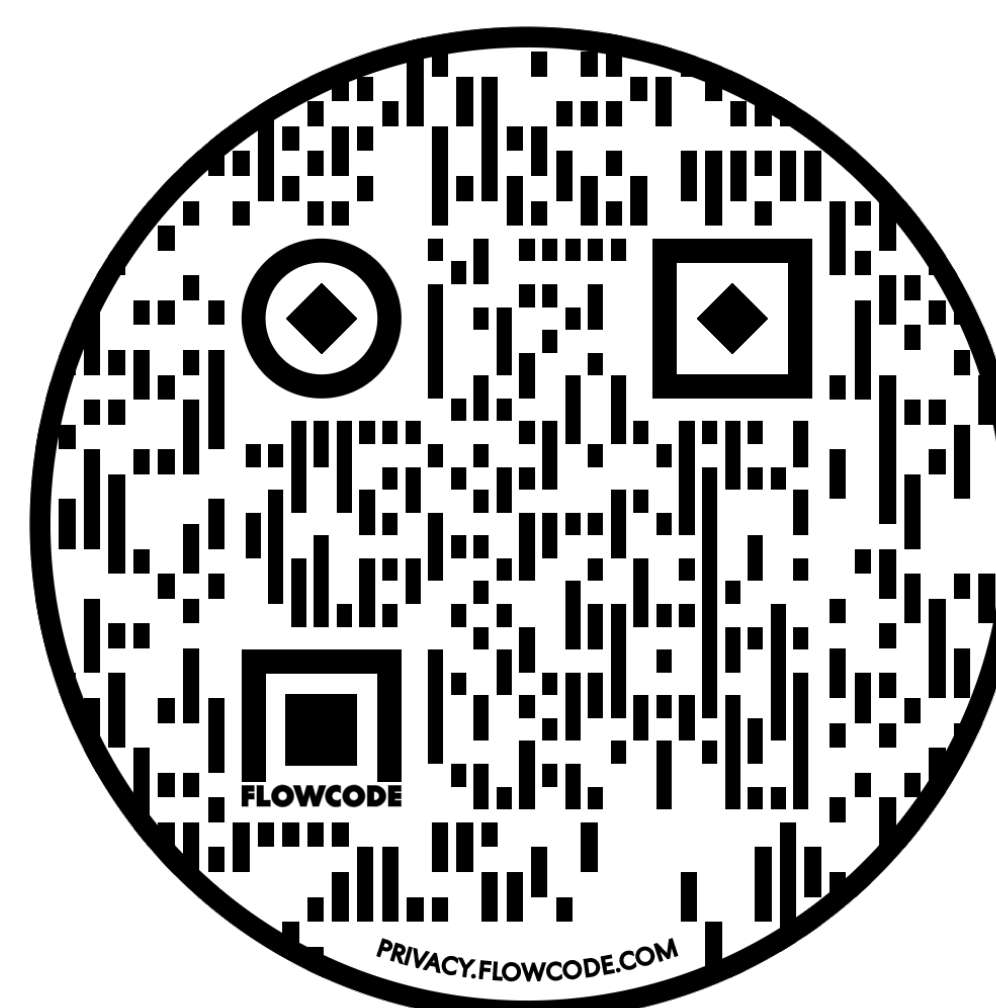
Discussion

- 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

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