

The Effects of COVID-19 on Health Professions Student Global Learning Experiences at a Single Institution

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Background

Global education experiences for health care professionals during formal training improves cultural sensitivity and fosters a desire to improve global disparities.^{1,2} The impact of the COVID-19 virus disruption to these global education experiences may impact future health provider aspirations and plans. In a time when a global pandemic is exploiting health inequities in a profound way, the skills future medical providers can attain during an international experiential educational experiences become essential.³

Purpose

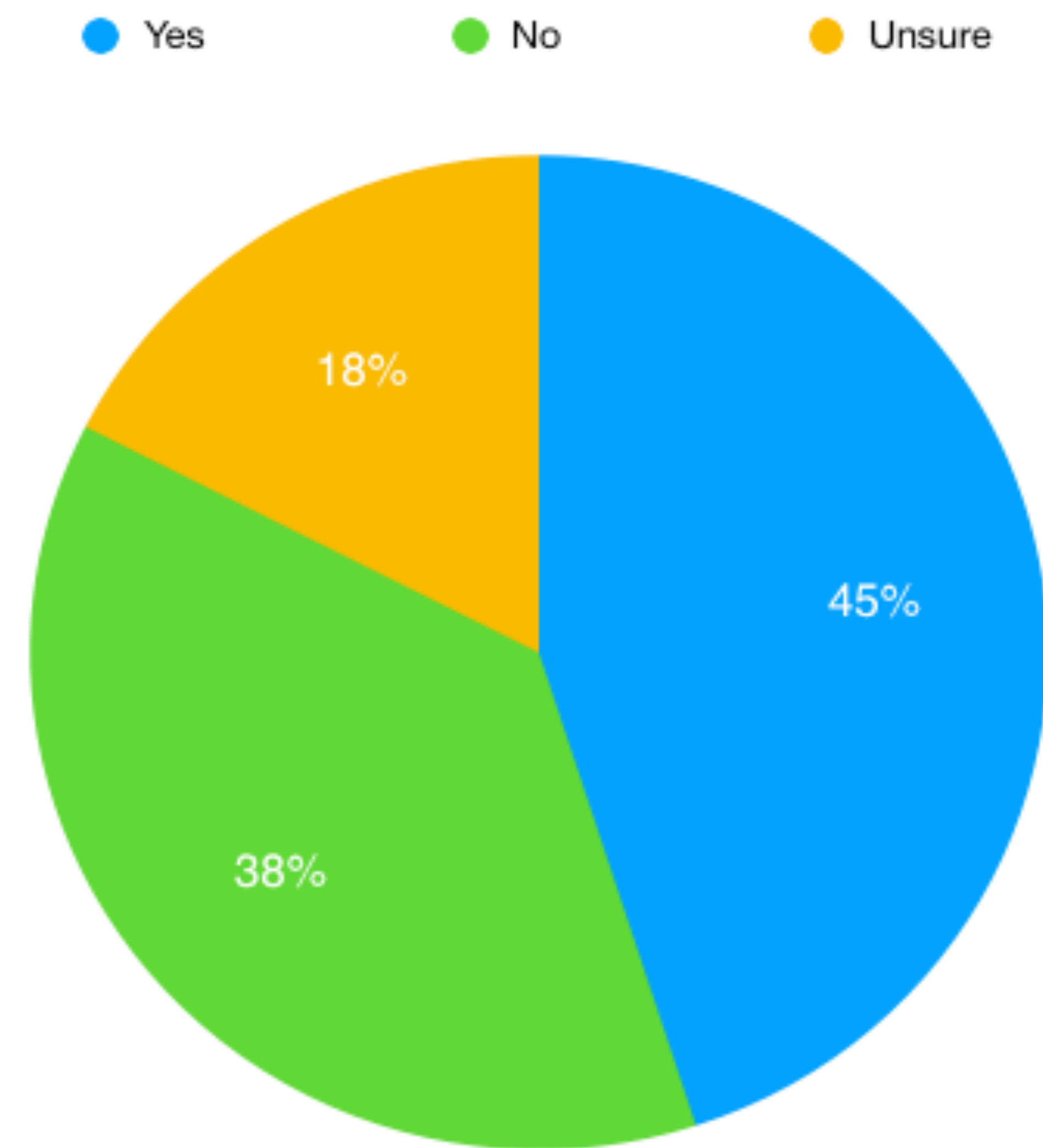
The purpose of this investigation was to explore the impact that COVID-19 had on health professions students who had expressed interest in a global health learning experience.

Research Question

How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact health professions student ability to attend a global education learning experience and attitudes about future global education learning experiences?

Results

Will you pursue another global education experience in the future?



A total of 39% of these health professions students were formally enrolled in a global education experience that was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

How can health professions students best contribute during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- “Volunteering for contact tracing efforts, COVID-19 screening or other areas where students have experience and expertise to allow other essential workers to keep their normal jobs.”
- “I think it is important to utilize them (students) in educating the public and advocating for health care.”
- “Volunteer opportunities, patient education, online forums for lay people – Wherever the need is most.”

Methods

A mixed method design was used with 102 health professions students from the Shenandoah University division of physician assistant studies, physical therapy, and occupational therapy. The study explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on health professions students desire to enroll in global learning experiences in the future and ways that students believed they could be of assistance during the COVID-19 global pandemic or during a future pandemic.

Discussion

In a time when a global pandemic has brought the world to a halt, and disproportionately harmed the most vulnerable populations, the paramount role of global education opportunities is of the utmost importance. Health care providers must continue to be trained in global health excellence and cultural competence as collaborators on an interdisciplinary team.^{2,3} The results from this survey are promising for the future of graduate health professions student education. The desire to participate in a global learning experience in the future remains favorable among health professions students and may be preserved with intentional guidance and collaboration.

References

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