PA students may benefit more from earlier mental health training

Hwal Lee, PA-S; Robert D. Hadley, PhD, PA-C
Radford University PA Program, Roanoke, VA

BACKGROUND

- PA students experience a high degree of burnout; mental health indicators shown to worsen during clinical year of training.
- Stigma and lack of awareness of resources barriers to help-seeking
- No current, published guideline to proactively support PA students’ mental health.
- This study evaluated the effectiveness of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training for PA students regarding mental health literacy and stigma, awareness of resources, and practical application.

METHODOLOGY

- Incoming cohort (IC; n=31) and graduating cohort (GC; n=30) of PA students completed MHFA training in the week before matriculation and within one week of graduation, respectively.
- Pre- and post-training MHFA opinions quiz results to examine changes in mental health knowledge & stigmatising beliefs and attitudes; student feedback analysed to ascertain overall response to the training.
- One-month follow-up survey responses analysed to assess the utility of training.

RESULTS

Both IC and GC saw improvements in their opinions quiz scores (12.50% vs 36.36%, respectively), and a paired t-test showed a significant overall improvement (95% CI 26.89-32.97; p < .0001).

Student feedback (n=61) revealed overall IC sentiment, “Every PA student should take this course before starting PA studies,” vs overall GC sentiment, “I wish I had this training earlier.”

CONCLUSION

MHFA presents an effective strategy to support PA student mental health. Further, PA students may benefit more from earlier mental health training.

REFERENCES


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CORRESPONDENCE

Hwal Lee, PA-S
Certified Mental Health First Aid Instructor
hlee14@Radford.edu