

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 analysis (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.

INCOMING COHORT (IC, n=31)

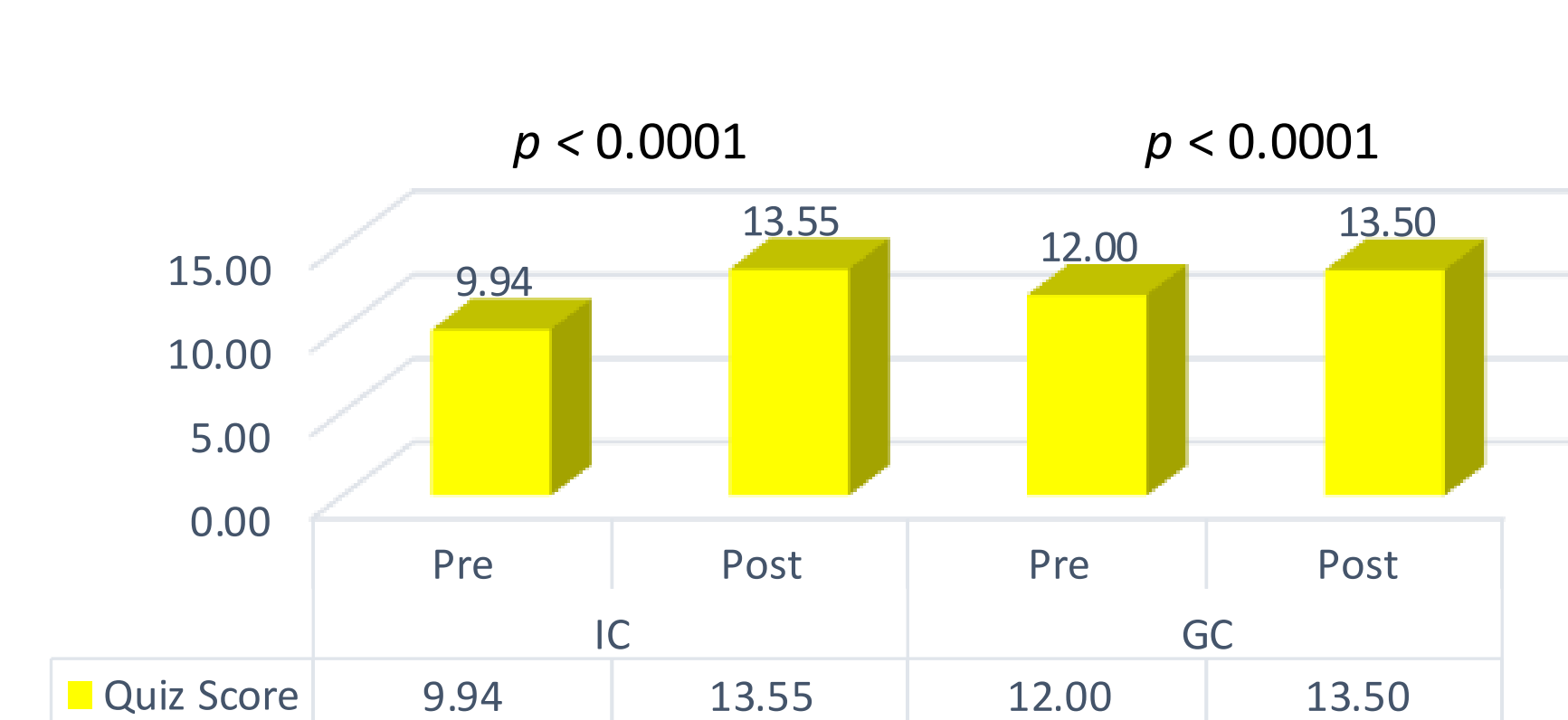


IC STUDENTS SAY...

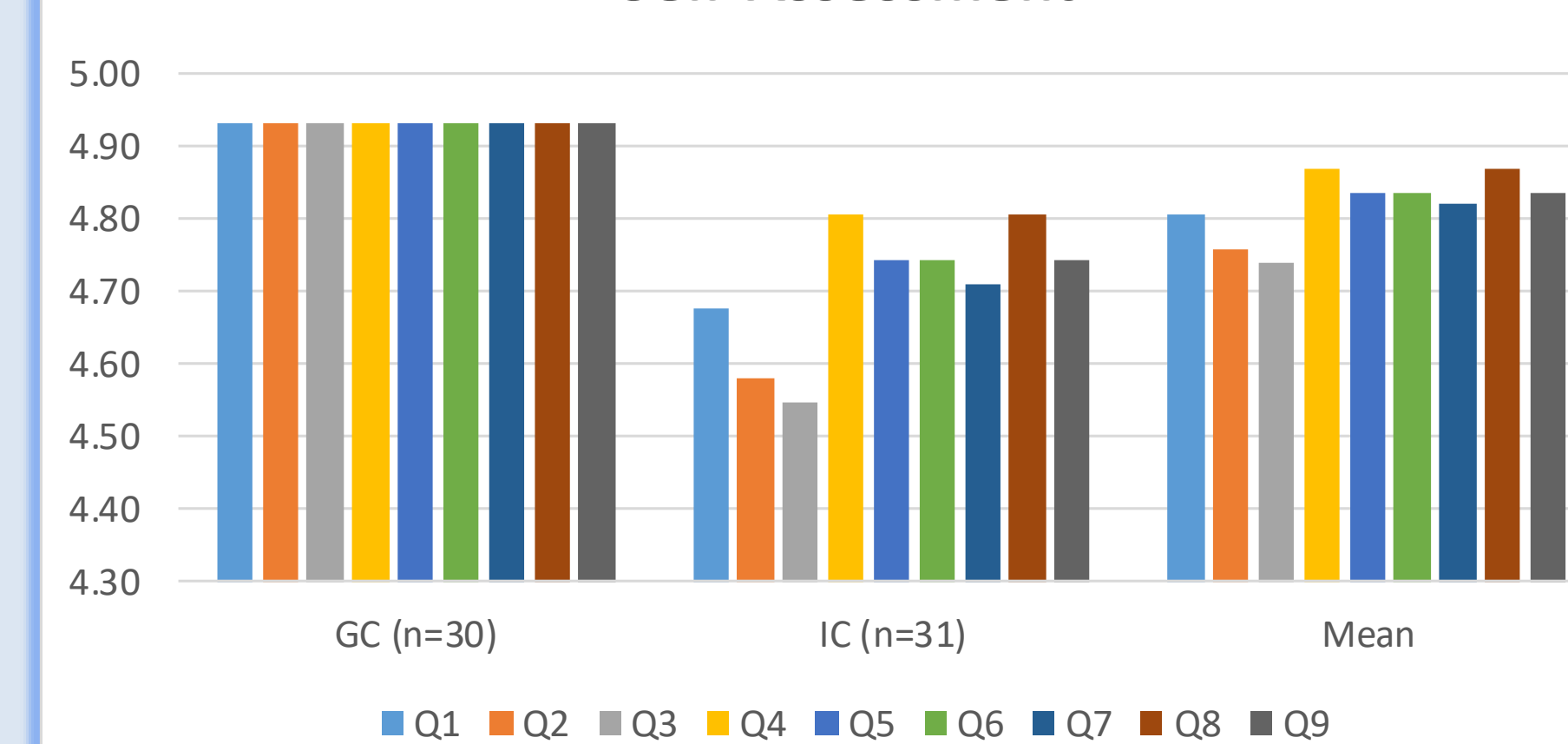


TRAINING OUTCOMES

PRE- & POST-TRAINING QUIZ SCORES



Post-Training Practical Application Self-Assessment



- Q1: Recognising signs of a mental health problem or crisis
 Q2: Reaching out to someone in distress or crisis
 Q3-Q7: Applying 5-step ALGEE action plan
 Q8: Awareness of own views and feelings about mental health and mental disorders
 Q9: Recognise and correct misconceptions about mental health and mental illness

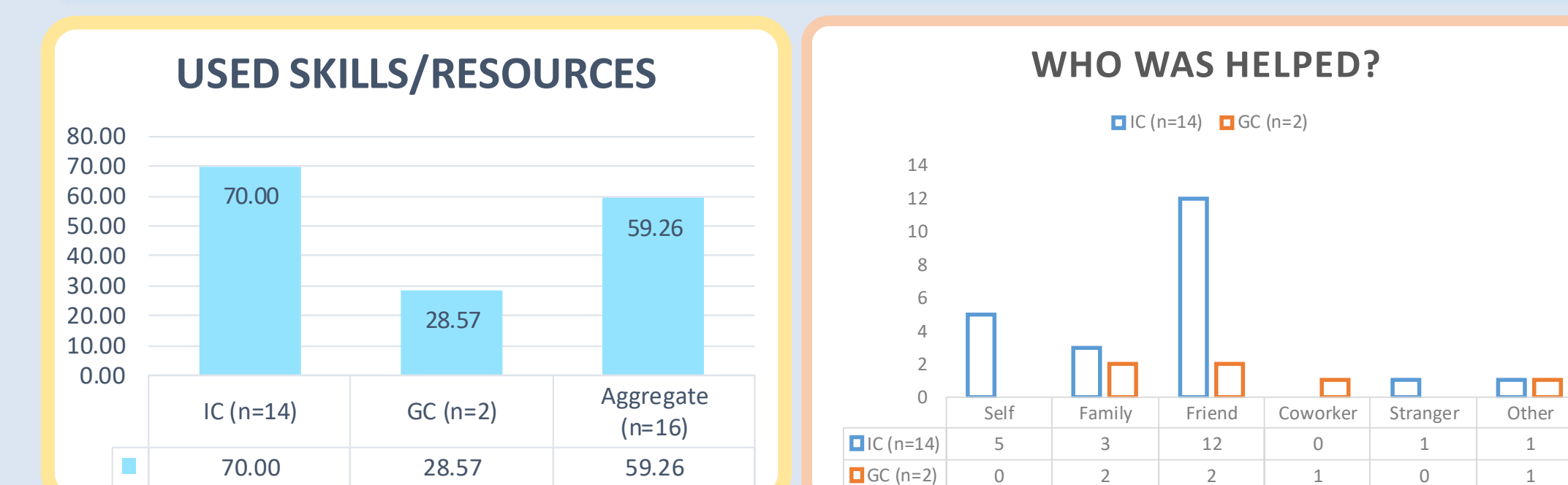
GRADUATING COHORT (GC, n=30)



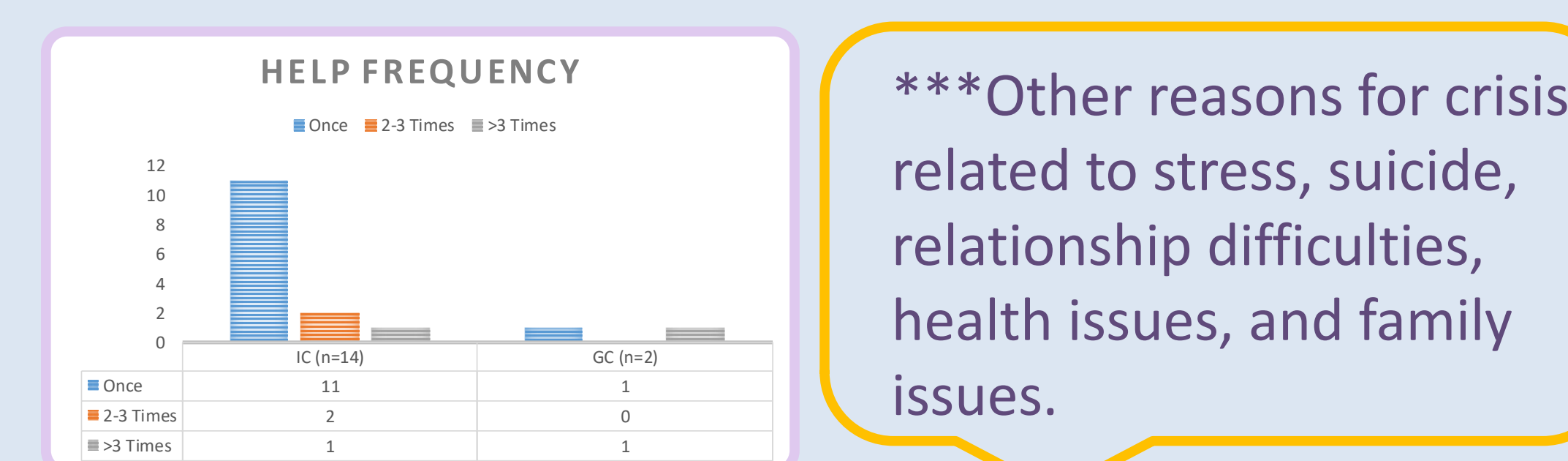
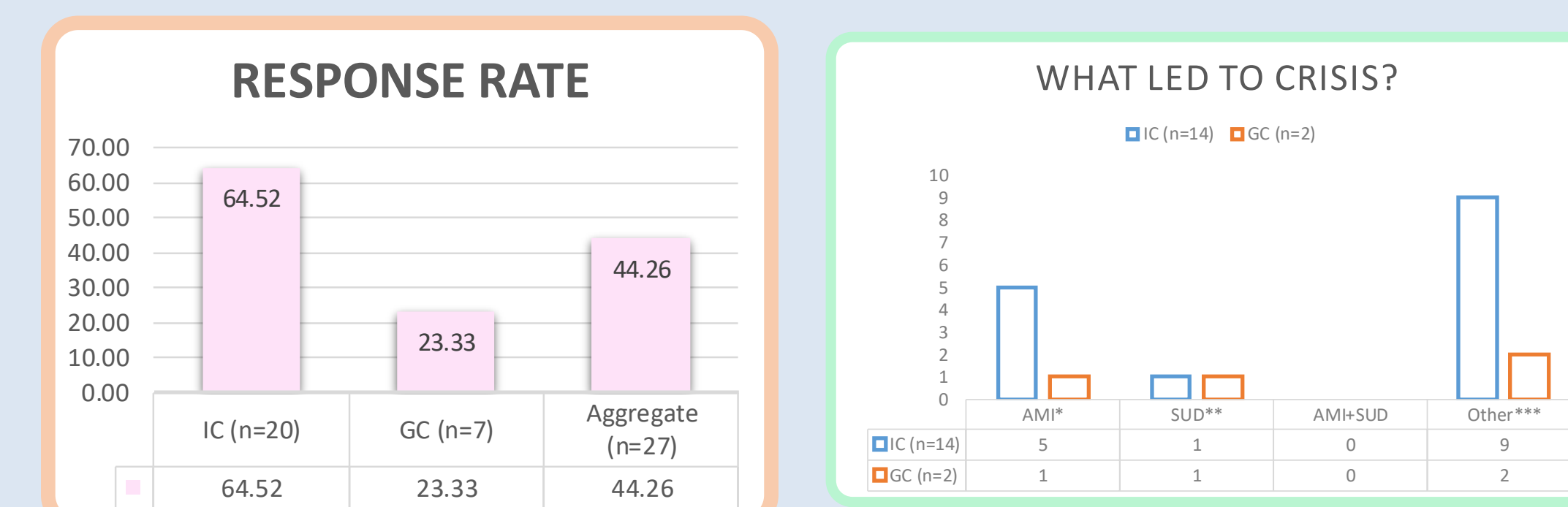
GC STUDENTS SAY...



1-MONTH FOLLOW-UP SURVEY RESULTS



→ One-month follow-up survey results revealed application of skills. Considerably more IC respondents (14 vs 2 GC respondents) reported using the skills and resources learned in training, and more than 1/3 of IC respondents (vs no GC respondents) reported self-help.



***Other reasons for crisis related to stress, suicide, relationship difficulties, health issues, and family issues.

REFERENCES

- Brown MH. The increased awareness of physician assistant student mental health. *The Journal of Physician Assistant Education*. 2004 Jan 1;15(2):116-20.
- Orozco JM, Furman JA, Roman C, Guthrie J, Jackson C. Burnout prevalence in PA students. *JAAPA-J Am Acad Phys*. 2016 Oct 1;29(10):1.
- Neary S, Bradley M, Roman C. A Call to Action: Physician Assistant Student Well-Being. *The Journal of Physician Assistant Education*. 2019 Sep 1;30(3):133-4.
- Physician Assistant Education Association, By the Numbers: Student Report 3: Data from the 2018 Matriculating Student and End of Program Surveys, Washington, D.C.: PAEA, 2019. doi: 10.17538/SR2019.0003

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

- nccPA Health Foundation – Kathy J Pedersen Grant to Promote Equitable Care
- Blue Ridge Behavioral Healthcare
- Radford University PA Program
- University of Lynchburg PA Program
- PA Foundation – Mental Health Outreach Fellowship



CORRESPONDENCE

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