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A Prospective Study of Medical Students’ Perceived Mental Health and Preferences for Self-Disclosure

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Conflicts of Interest

The Authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.
Objectives

By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Discuss how often medical students perceive they have a mental health diagnosis

2. Describe student attitudes towards disclosure of mental health to ERAS or the NMMB.

3. Identify reasons for non-disclosure
Background

• Medical students experience higher rates of anxiety and depression than their age-matched peers. [1]

• Practicing physicians are reluctant to seek care for mental health due to fear of career repercussions. [2]

• Little is known about whether or not medical students would self-disclose a mental health concern on either Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS®) or state licensing applications.
Methods

• 10-question anonymous survey sent in July 2018 to the classes of 2019-2022 and in July 2019 to the classes of 2020-2023.

• These questions explored year of enrollment, self-perceived mental health diagnoses, likelihood of pursuing mental health care, likelihood of disclosure of diagnoses on residency and licensing applications, and the reasons for not disclosing.
Results

Average response rate of the two years was 49.8% (391 respondents). At least 45% of students recall retaking the survey.

Total Combined Survey Respondents

- 1st Year: 32%
- 2nd Year: 23%
- 3rd Year: 23%
- 4th Year: 22%
The average self-perceived mental health of both cohorts was worse in third year students than in first year students (odds ratio of 11.8) (95% CI: 6.09-22.88). There was no significant difference between the two cohorts (P-value= 0.51).
Results

Willingness to Disclose by Cohort

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Percentage

ERAS Study Year 2
ERAS Study Year 1
NMNM Study Year 2
NMNM Study Year 1
Results

Top Reasons for Non-disclosure Among Both Cohorts

1. Fear of Stigmatization (67%)
2. Fear of not matching (64%)
3. Wanting to be viewed more competitively on the application (62%)
4. Fear of Repercussions (60%)
Results

1st Survey
Average = 6.06

2nd Survey
Average = 6.03
Discussion Points

Our findings indicate that medical students commonly perceive themselves to have mental health diagnoses. Our results are similar to the results of other studies. [3-4]

45% of students perceived their mental health worsened since the start of medical school.

Only 8% of students with a presumed mental health condition felt comfortable reporting to ERAS®, and only 19% felt comfortable reporting on a licensing application.
Conclusions

Students perceive a decline in their mental health as they progress through medical school.

Students are unlikely to disclose mental health diagnoses on residency applications or state medical board applications.

Common reasons for not disclosing mental health status include fear of stigmatization, desire to be a competitive applicant, fear of repercussions or judgment, and a belief that the diagnosis is not relevant to job performance or ability.
References


Questions

THAT CONCLUDES MY TWO-HOUR PRESENTATION. ANY QUESTIONS?

DID YOU INTEND THE PRESENTATION TO BE INCOMPREHENSIBLE, OR DO YOU HAVE SOME SORT OF RARE "POWER-POINT" DISABILITY?

ARE THERE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CONTENT?

THERE WAS CONTENT.