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### COVID Impact on Mental Health Across Medical School Classes

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## Background

- Medical students pre pandemic were known to have higher rates of depression and anxiety than their age-matched peers (1,2).
- In March 2020, AAMC recommended medical students discontinue face to face clinical interactions; the majority of medical education transitioned to a virtual format.
- For students in pre-clinical years, the pandemic created new challenges such as online learning, limited access to campus facilities, and isolation from peers.
- For students in clinical years, the pandemic translated to decreased opportunities to build relationships with faculty and decreased experience in clinical settings.

## Hypothesis/ Objectives

- We hypothesized that students in their third year of medical school (class of 2021) and students matriculating into their first year (class of 2024) would have more anxiety about the negative impact of COVID-19 on their medical education compared with students in their second year (class of 2023).
- Primary Objective:** Establish the impact of COVID on mental wellbeing across the UNM SOM Classes of 2021, 2023, and 2024. We also want to identify any unique differences between the classes, since medical education provides a stark contrast between didactic and clinical years.
- Secondary Objectives:** Identify the impact of COVID on financial wellbeing, medical education, and impact on future career.

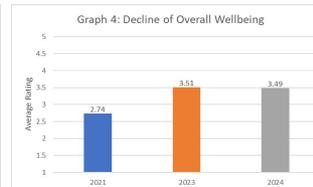
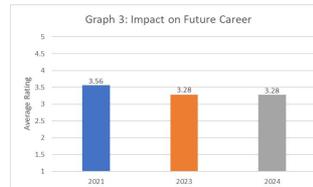
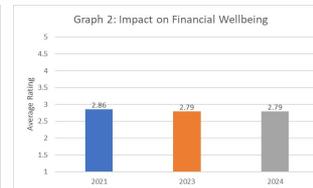
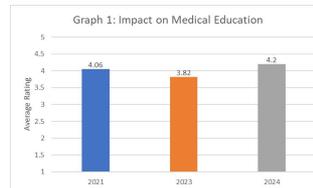
## Methods

- Study setting: University of New Mexico
- Study design: We compiled a survey and administered it May-August 2020
- Study groups: UNM SOM Classes 2021, 2023, 2024

Students answered these questions on a Likert scale with responses including: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, agree, or strongly agree. They were asked about overall wellbeing.

## Data Collection

- The survey was administered on a secure site (REDCap) and data was compiled into a spreadsheet.
- The results for each question were averaged and compared to the averages across classes via a two sample t-test.
  - T-test values were analyzed for significance.



- All data was taken on a scale of 1-5 with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree
- A higher average rating corresponds to increased agreement with each of the following statements:
  - I am anxious about the about the impact of COVID-19 on my medical education (graph 1).
  - I am anxious about the impact of COVID-19 on my financial wellbeing (graph 2).
  - I am anxious about the impact of COVID-19 on my future career (graph 3).
  - My wellbeing has declined since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (graph 4).

## Findings

- Responses to two out of four survey statements reflected statistical significance:
  - The class of 2024 had reported levels of anxiety about the impact of COVID-19 on their medical education that were significantly higher than the levels of anxiety reported by the class of 2023 (graph 1).
  - The class of 2023 had a significantly greater decline in wellbeing than the class of 2021 (graph 4).

## Discussion

- Our data suggests varied impacts of the pandemic on determinants of well-being, amongst medical students at differing levels of training.
- Specific areas of discrepancy to be explored further include the pandemic's impact on medical student anxiety regarding their medical education as well as impact on overall well-being.
- Any effective attempt to respond to emotional ramifications of the pandemic in medical students must take into account the variability of impact upon students in different stages of their medical education.

## References

- Menon, A., Klein, E. J., Kollars, K., and Kleinhenz, A. L. W. (2020) Medical Students Are Not Essential Workers: Examining Institutional Responsibility During the COVID-19 Pandemic. Acad Med. 10.1097/ACM.0000000000003478
- Ferrel, M. N., and Ryan, J. J. (2020) The Impact of COVID-19 on Medical Education. Cureus. 12, e7492