E-Poster

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Evaluating the Effects of a Disability Awareness Seminar on Medical Student's Attitudes Toward Individuals With Disabilities

Topic: Education (Medical Student, Residency & Post-Graduate)

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BACKGROUND

Cultural competence within medical practice faces persistent challenges, especially concerning disability. Although 98% of medical students report having received training on disability during their studies, 80% consider this training to be inadequate and express a need for strategic educational interventions. Implementing competency-based educational programs using active learning methods could therefore strengthen the "acculturation to disability" among future health professionals as disability concerns 16% of the population worldwide.

METHODS

Since 2022, the Saint-Etienne University conducts a mandatory disability awareness week for third year medical students. We took the opportunity to collect demographic information, and evaluations of quantitative data measured by the Disability Attitudes in Health Care score (DAHC), a 17-items 5-likert point scale (ranging from 17 to 85) and qualitative data (based on semi-structured interviews) through two online surveys (IRBN372023/CHUSTE). We hypothesized that participation would significantly improve attitudes towards individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, a replicability study has also been set up for the 2025 edition.

RESULTS

A total of 218 students (mean age: 21.1 ±1.4 years) were included in the study. While 60% of participants reported no prior working experience with disabled individuals, there was a significant improvement in paired-DAHC scores three months after the seminar (+1.32, p = 0.003). Improvements were predominantly observed in comfort levels during interaction and discriminatory attitudes. This practical experience was positively reported by the interviewed students, who noted that the encounter facilitated a transition from unfamiliarity to informed empathy and knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The integration of disability awareness into medical curricula should be prioritized to enhance the quality of working life for future caregivers and improve the overall patient and family's experiences. Mixed-methods studies are still needed to address these issues.

Statement of Disclosures

None

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