

Improvement of Knowledge and Attitudes in Aging and Health Care:

Efficacy of an Integrative Undergraduate Geriatrics Education Program

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Background: Entering medical students hold many misconceptions about aging¹. Although some geriatric educational interventions have shown positive and improved changes in student's perceptions of older adults^{2,3}, few models offer a competency-based integrative program across the undergraduate curriculum. Over the past 4 years 22,323 person-hours per year of geriatric content was added to our curriculum. We evaluated the impact on medical students' perceptions on aging and health care.

Methods: A 40-question Aging & Health Care: Medical Student's Perceptions survey⁴ was administered to students in their first year of medical school and re-administered at the end of third year. Analysis of variance was conducted on 36 questions. The effect size was calculated using eta squared.

Results: 16 out of 36 survey items revealed significant differences in perception on aging and health care by the end of their third year.

Change in aging and health care perceptions between 1st year and end of 3rd year.

Sampling of Survey Items on Aging & Healthcare	Year 1 2009 Mean	Year 2 2012 Mean	Significance (2-tailed)
I feel very comfortable around older adults.	3.88	4.23	p < .001
I am comfortable talking with an older patient about their death.	2.88	3.35	p < .001
I know a lot about growing older.	2.48	3.13	p < .001
Increasing pain is a natural part of aging.	3.30	2.58	p < .001
I enjoy being around older adults.	2.26	3.84	P = .001
Education on treatment of older adults is NOT well integrated in the overall curriculum.	3.28	2.96	p < .001

Conclusions: Our findings demonstrate that exposure to an integrative educational program improved knowledge and attitudes on aging and healthcare. This is significant as prior work has shown that medical students can develop negative attitudes towards the care of the chronically ill and geriatric patient during medical school¹.

References:

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