

Introduction

- Empathy and compassion are defined as the ability to match another's emotions, having genuine care for others with a desire to help, and putting aside differences to have a mutual understanding of another's condition.
- Scholarship and mentorship is important for academic medicine, but empathy is equally important in providing meaningful patient care. All Medical College of Wisconsin students are required to complete a scholarly pathway project by their third year of medical school.
- There are 8 available pathways that include Bioethics, Clinical Educator, Global Health, Health Systems and Policy, Physician Scientist, and Quality Improvement pathways. The pathways provide opportunities for scholarship, mentorship, and collaboration.
- This survey-based project studied current medical students' empathetic growth based on their pathway choices and if their pathway influenced their empathy levels. Finally, we aim to develop new strategies/curriculum to improve the empathy and compassion of graduating medical students.

Specific Aims

Specific Aim 1: To identify students' beliefs on role of empathy and compassion on patient outcomes

Specific Aim 2: To assess students' perspectives on current empathy and compassion training through scholarly pathways in the medical school curriculum

Methods

- Third and fourth year medical students at Medical College of Wisconsin were emailed a Qualtrics survey.
- Their response to the survey served as their consent and our primary data.
- We analyzed the surveys using conventional quantitative analysis.
- Responses to the 5-point Likert scales were dichotomized and analyzed as proportions. T-test, w2, and Wilcoxon Ranksum tests were performed.

Results

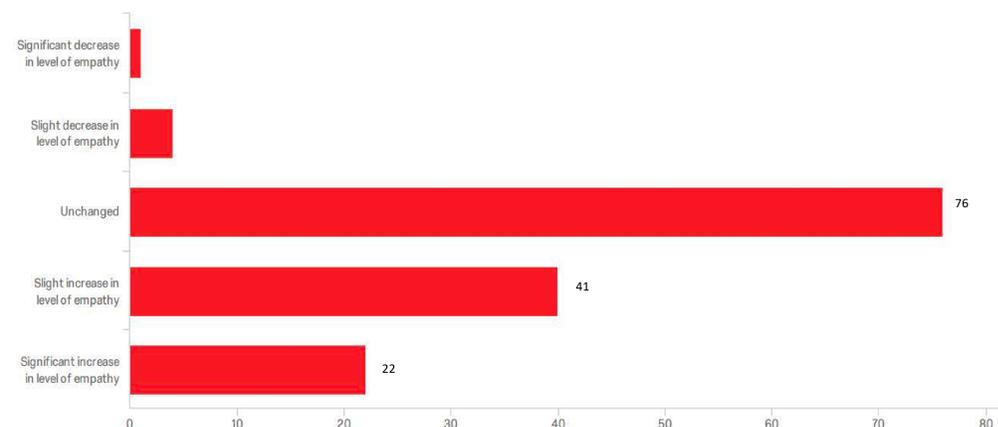
Characteristics of survey respondents	Number (%)
Year of medical school	
M3	64 (44.4%)
M4	80 (55.6%)
Gender	
Male	88 (61.1%)
Female	56 (38.9%)

Table 1. Gender and years of medical school of the survey respondents.

Table 2. Responses to the survey question: "What is your opinion about the role of empathy and compassion while providing patient care?"

Role of empathy and compassion	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Improves patient outcomes	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	3 (2.1%)	35 (24.3%)	104 (72.2%)
Increases patient's satisfaction with the provider	1 (0.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.7%)	15 (10.4%)	127 (88.2%)
Detracts from the quality of care the patient receives	88 (61.1%)	45 (31.3%)	4 (2.8%)	6 (4.2%)	1 (0.7%)
Causes emotional burnout and/or compassion fatigue	31 (21.5%)	44 (30.6%)	37 (25.7%)	29 (20.1%)	3 (2.1%)

Responses are provided as frequencies (N) and respective percentages.



Response to the question if pathways influenced empathy levels in patient interaction

Survey Comments

- "Learning more about the global issues currently going on has helped me become more understanding of patients going through a variety of struggles that might not be apparent when first meeting."
- "My pathway frequently discusses vulnerable populations and socioeconomic factors that influence health. Learning these things has made me more aware of the challenges people face surrounding health care and access, and this has made me more empathetic."
- "Doing family medicine at a federally qualified health center and working with underinsured/uninsured with an overwhelmingly kind and empathetic team was SO valuable and humbling. They demonstrated compassion and respect in every encounter. I think every student would benefit from experiences like this."

Conclusion

- The overarching goal of this study was to understand the impact of scholarly pathways on empathy levels in third and fourth year medical students.
- The data showed that the majority of medical students thought their pathway did not affect or increased their empathy levels. Few students thought their pathway decreased their level of empathy.

Next Steps

- From the faculty perspective, such a major transition to integrated or problem-based learning will still require ongoing encouragement and non-threatening positive feedback that is aimed at further improving the student-teacher relationship.
- Create feedback surveys to understand student views towards curriculum
- However, significant number of students felt that there was slight increase in empathy levels.

Acknowledgments

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