Seeking Peer Outreach

An integrated, tiered approach to address stigma and isolation in medical education

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Presentation Summary

Healthcare providers have a higher rate of suicide than other professions.

Stressors beginning in **medical education** could be driving this trend:
- Intervention: change in culture during medical education

A novel program integrating **peer support** in a **tiered public health model** was developed for the Medical College of Wisconsin:
- Prevent suicide
- Promote mental wellness
Healthcare providers have a higher rate of suicide than the general population. (Frank et. al., 2000; Pospos et. al., 2019)

The stigma of psychiatric diagnoses and of mental health treatment may decrease healthcare workers', students', and educators' willingness to seek help for their wellbeing. (Fischbein & Bonfine, 2019; Knaak et. al., 2017)

October 26, 2020
Dear Medical Students,

It is with great sadness that we share the news of the unexpected death of [redacted], a fourth-year medical student at the MCW Milwaukee campus. This past weekend, [redacted]'s brother posted news of his passing on social media sites yesterday and requested that people respect the family's privacy in this moment of profound grief.
Impact on Physicians

Attending physicians: ↑ risk suicide, despite ↓ risk all-cause mortality  
(Frank et al., 2000; Torre et al., 2005)

Resident physicians: 2nd leading cause of death  
(Yaghmour et al., 2017)

↑ risk suicide and burnout  
(Milner et al., 2016)

Figure 1 | Suicide rates by age category among physicians and the general population (white males, 26 U.S. states, 1984–1992).
Relevance: Medical Students

Beginning vs. end of medical school:

Distress: 2% → 12%

Burnout: 17% → 38%

(Adapted from Hansell et al., 2019)

Depression peak: end of MS1

(Wolf et al., 1998)
Relevance: Pharmacy Students

**Depression:** Reported by 18% of pharmacy students
- Less likely to seek help (11%)
- Higher levels of stigma regarding mental health treatment
  
  (Fischbein & Bonfine, 2019)

**Severe depression:** Over 25% of pharmacy students

(Sabourin et al., 2019)

U.S. incidence of adult depression:

9.0%

(CDC, 2010)
Relevance: Other Graduate Students

Suicide risk: 21.2% of graduate students  
(Bruns & Letcher, 2018)

Burnout: 17.0% of dental students  
(Campos et. al., 2012)

Barriers: Suicidal graduate students do not access mental health services  
(Moffitt et. al., 2014)
Burnout:
• 41.3% of pharmacy faculty
• 59% of anesthesiology chairs
• 70% of otolaryngology faculty

Increased in:
• Assistant professors

(De Oliveira et. al, 2011; El-Ibiary et. al., 2017; Golub et. al., 2008)
Culture change as early as medical education.

(Adapted from Givens et. al., 2002)
What has been done before

Dobson et. al., 2019; Downs et. al., 2013; Fernandes et. al., 2020; Knaak et. al., 2017; Moffitt et. al., 2014; Thompson et. al., 2010
What is SPO*?

Scope: All MCW students, faculty, and staff
- All MCW campuses & schools
- URIM & academia

Seeking Peer Outreach (SPO*): student-led initiative of SPC

Suicide Prevention Council (SPC):
- Academic Affairs
- Public Safety
- Office of Communications
- Corporate Compliance
- Human Resources
- Faculty Affairs
- General Counsel
- Student learners
Approach

- Prevention Training
- Discussion/Empowerment
- Learning opportunities
- Responsibility for each other

Tier 1
- 1° Prevention Training
- Discussion/Empowerment
- Learning opportunities
- Responsibility for each other

Tier 2
- Select trained individuals
- Display willingness to support (decal)
- Mental health screening, support, events

Tier 3
- Referral resources
- Improved access

ACTIVE Outreach
QR Code Logo
Culture change
MCW-CW Pilot Program

1. Tier
   - Discussions in Navigation Teams (4C Coaching)

2. Tier
   - Reflective exercises
   - Discussions in Navigation Teams (4C Coaching)

3. Tier
   - Peer support networks
     - Anonymous platform
     - Increased accessibility

Normalization of mental health discussions

Peer support networks
Lessons Learned

MCW annual mental health climate survey
• Institution-wide
• Pertinent risk factors

Population-specific initiatives
• Stigma → Normalization
• Isolation → Peer support

Enhanced accessibility to resources
• Embedded QR code
Lessons Learned

Tier 2 Training:
• Comfortable handling mental health crisis: 50%
• ↑ Safe language for suicide prevention

Future Plans:
• Peer support & wellness activities
• Program evaluation
• Further integration within learning communities
• Institute-wide launch
Significance

Culture change:
• Learning new skills
• Providing framework for individual & community growth

Diminish existing barriers to seeking and receiving mental wellness

Applicable to all members of MCW
Citations

Thank you for your time and attention!

Questions?