

Assessment of Preclinical Nutrition Education and Confidence in Nutrition Counseling Skills in Clinical Clerkships in Medical Students

Jonathan Raskin¹ and Virginia Uhley Ph.D., RDN¹

¹Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine (OUWB), Rochester, MI

Background

National educational efforts have been made to increase the nutrition content in the medical school curriculum, including nutrition assessment skill training, with limited success in implementation.¹ Barriers and gaps within the medical school curriculum have been identified, including lack of time and resources. Although many institutions have created initiatives to strengthen the nutrition training of their medical students, students still rate their nutrition knowledge as substandard and do not feel confident in their nutrition counseling skills¹

Objectives

To assess the nutritional knowledge of medical students before and after their first clerkship (M3 year) specifically evaluating their ability, attitude, confidence, and opportunity to proficiently apply nutrition counseling skills.

Methods

We developed and administered a survey to all OUWB M3 medical students in the Class of 2023 and 2024, before and at the end of their first clinical clerkship rotation. The first survey was 22 questions and the end survey was 25 questions administered through an online Qualtrics platform.

Results

The statistical analysis (paired t-test) revealed that students reported a slightly increased confidence in their preclinical nutrition knowledge after finishing in their first clerkship rotation. However, students reported lower confidence in their nutrition counseling abilities in patients diagnosed with a gastroenterology or hematology related medical issue or disease. Students also identified barriers to nutrition education and opportunities that they felt could enhance their nutrition counseling skill development.

Conclusion

Our study identified the lack of medical students' perceived nutrition knowledge and application before and after their first clerkships, supporting the importance of greater integration of nutrition education and skill application opportunities into the medical school curriculum.