The Integration of Lifestyle Medicine into the Fourth-Year Medical Student Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) Clerkship

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BACKGROUND

In 2014, the American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM) and American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM) introduced the first curriculum to address the educational needs of physicians as they relate to lifestyle change. The ACLM defines lifestyle medicine as “the evidence-based therapeutic approach to prevent, treat and reverse lifestyle-related chronic diseases.” The need to include lifestyle medicine and its ability to address key modifiable behaviors within medical education is evidenced by the substantial impact of chronic diseases on the US population. Research suggests chronic diseases, including heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes, are responsible for most deaths in the US. Furthermore, physicians have cited a lack of confidence, knowledge and skill employing lifestyle interventions in the clinical setting.

RATIONALE/NEED

This project addresses the medical curriculum gap as it relates to learning about, and implementing, lifestyle medicine in clinical practice. Fourth-year medical students in the PM&R clerkship will participate in interprofessional education to explore a growing clinical need to effectively address chronic disease prevention and management. As chronic diseases now comprise 78% of US healthcare costs and 75% of all disease worldwide by 2020, medical students must be equipped with the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary to educate patients about lifestyle change.

DESCRIPTION

Didactic and interprofessional training promotes positive attitudes towards patients with chronic disease, and towards patients who stand to benefit from lifestyle medicine interventions. This suggests that students may be more inclined to develop an evidence-based approach to this patient population in their clinical practice. Fourth year medical students enrolled in a required PM&R clerkship will participate in a lifestyle medicine session (exercise prescription, mindful breathing or healthy eating), and attitudes about lifestyle medicine and behavioral change topics with patients in a clinical setting will be assessed before and after.

EVALUATION PLAN

Data collection will occur throughout the 2017-2018 academic year. A confidential online questionnaire will collect data on the project experience and attitudes about counseling patients in each lifestyle medicine session.

POTENTIAL IMPACT

Research has demonstrated that the integration of lifestyle medicine topics, including exercise prescription, stress management and healthy eating, into the undergraduate medical curriculum improves student self-efficacy, competence, and clinical confidence when addressing behavioral health topics with patients. Although the project is designed for medical students, it could be useful for Interprofessional educational experiences.

REFERENCES