



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES CLINICAL & POPULATION HEALTH RESEARCH PROGRAM

Ph.D. THESIS DEFENSE

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Factors Associated with Weight Management Counseling Training During Primary Care Core Clerkships

Background: The United States Preventive Services Task Force guidelines support screening and provision of intensive multi-component behavioral counseling for adults who have obesity. One barrier to providing such counseling is lack of training in medical school. Not much is known about factors associated with medical students' perceived weight management counseling (WMC) skills or whether preceptors model or teach WMC during primary care clerkships.

Methods: A mixed methods approach addressed factors affecting WMC training during primary care clerkships. A secondary analysis of 3rd year medical students (n=730) described students' perceived WMC skills, attitudes and frequency of engagement in 5As educational experiences. Linear mixed models were used to determine associations between educational experiences and perceived skills. Semi-structured interviews (n=12) and a survey were administered to primary care preceptors (n=77). Interviews described individual, inter-personal and institutional factors associated with preceptors' WMC. The survey described preceptors' frequency of modeling WMC behaviors, perceived WMC skills, and attitudes.

Results: Students perceived themselves to be moderately skilled (M=2.6, SD=0.05, range 1-4). Direct patient experiences and specific instruction were associated with higher perceived skill. Preceptors support WMC curricula but do not perceive themselves to be experts in WMC. Preceptors perceive themselves to be moderately skilled (M=2.8, SD=0.06, range 1-4) but only sometimes model WMC (M=3.3, SD=0.05, range 1-5) to students during clerkships.

Conclusion: Preceptor modeling WMC may not be feasible or necessary during primary care clerkships. Providing specific WMC instruction and working with patients may provide more benefit as they were more strongly associated with students' perceived skills.

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