

First-year undergraduate paramedic student empathy and stigma towards people who use alcohol and other drugs

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Compared with historical controls, first-year undergraduate paramedic students in this sample had lower levels of overall empathy for patients, but also had lower levels of stigma towards people who use alcohol and other drugs

Introduction

- People who use alcohol and other drugs (PWUD) are amongst intersecting patient groups who suffer stigmatising attitudes when accessing the healthcare system ¹⁻³
- Previous research has highlighted paramedics hold stigmatising attitudes toward PWUD ⁴⁻⁵
- This poster reports the initial results of a three-year longitudinal study aiming to examine how the period of undergraduate paramedic education influences stigma and empathy amongst students

Methods

- Participants complete the Jefferson Scale of Empathy (Health Professions Students) ⁶ (Scores 20-140) and Medical Condition Regard Scale ⁷ (Scores 11-66) four times over their degree
- Higher JSE-HPS scores reflect higher empathy, higher MCRS scores indicate lower stigma
- Multi-linear regression was used to assess for predictors of empathy and stigma and Pearson's Correlation to assess for correlation between JSE-HPS and MCRS scores

Results

- 120 students across 10 institutions enrolled
- The mean initial empathy score was 87.1 (SD 6.2)
- The mean initial stigma score was 46.9 (SD 6.4)
- There was no association between age ($p=0.8$), gender ($p=0.6$), prior education ($p=0.8$), or prior experience with PWUD ($p=0.2$) and JSE-HPS or MCRS scores
- There was no correlation between initial JSE-HPS and MCRS scores [$r(98) = -0.6$, $p=0.54$]

Discussion

- JSE-HPS score in this sample are lower than historical samples ($p<0.001$) ⁸
- MCRS score in this sample are lower than historical samples ($p<0.001$) ⁹
- Performance and associations will be re-evaluated throughout students' undergraduate degree

Table 1: Participant Characteristics

Age	19 (IQR 18-25)
Gender	
Female	75 (62%)
Male	36 (30%)
Non-Binary	6 (5%)
No Answer	4 (3%)
Prior Education	
High School	77 (64%)
Apprenticeship	1 (1%)
TAFE	20 (17%)
Undergraduate	16 (13%)
Postgraduate	4 (3%)
Previous Experience	
None	11 (9%)
Family/Friends	91 (75%)
Volunteer	6 (5%)
Previous Work	6 (5%)
Other	4 (3%)

References:



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