**MEDICAL STUDENTS’ ATTITUDES TOWARDS PATIENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

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**Objectives:** Approximately 3.7 million Canadians have some form of developmental disability (Bizier, Fawcett, Gilbert & Marshall, 2012), and patients with developmental disabilities are known to have larger ranges of health problems compared to those without disabilities (Jansen, Krol, Groothoff & Post, 2004). An astounding 21.3% of physicians report feelings of discomfort when working with patients with disabilities (Aulagnier, Verger, Ravaud, Souville, Lussault & Garnier, 2005). Attitudes possessed by medical professionals is one of the factors that impacts access to health-care services, so it is important for medical students to have positive attitudes towards these patients (McColl, Forster, Shortt, Hunter, Dorland, Godwin & Rosser, 2008). Many of these future healthcare practitioners report not receiving enough formal training in relation to the needs of patients with developmental disabilities, which can lead to poorer health outcomes for this population (Ervin, Hennan, Derrick & Morad, 2014). This study investigates three main areas of concern:

* + - How competent do medical students feel when interacting with patients who have developmental disabilities?
    - How much experience do students get with patients who have disabilities during their undergraduate medical education?
    - How do instructor attitudes help shape students’ views of developmental disabilities?

**Methods:** Participants in this study will include undergraduate medical students from the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) in their third and fourth year of study. This study employs a mixed methods design, including both a a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire.

**Results:** This study is part of a larger research project, but results will focus on students attitudes. Data collection is ongoing and results will be presented at the time of the conference.

**Discussion:** Results from this study will provide valuable information for the improvement of medical care for patient with developmental disabilities. We are looking to determine whether there are potential attitudinal barriers that may be unintentionally created by both medical students and their instructors/supervisors. These barriers can lead to long-term health consequences for these patients. Results from this study may also inform how undergraduate medical school curricula can be enhanced in terms of teaching related to developmental disabilities.

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