**THE IMPACT OF MEDICAL INSTRUCTORS’ ATTITUDES TOWARDS PATIENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ON MEDICAL STUDENTS**

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**Objectives:** Patients with developmental disabilities (DD) have been found to be at a higher risk of health issues such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease when compared to the general population. Despite the relatively high prevalence of DD, and the need for disability-informed care for this population, healthcare providers frequently indicate that they feel uncomfortable working with individuals with DDs. Research indicates that this may be due to the lack of training on intellectual and developmental disabilities during their formal medical education, as well as the lack of exposure to patients with developmental disabilities in experiential learning. Many healthcare students report that they do not receive enough formal training on disabilities, which may result in negative health outcomes in this population. Healthcare providers’ knowledge, attitudes, and feelings of competence are factors that may impact access to, and quality of, care for individuals with DDs. Furthermore, previous studies have indicated that instructors’ knowledge, attitudes, and skills can impact their students’ attitudes toward this population.

**Methods:** This poster is informed by a larger, ongoing mixed methods study investigating healthcare students’ perceived abilities working with patients with DDs in Northern Ontario, as well as a major paper research project. This study aims to answer the question: What impact do instructors and preceptors have on medical students’ attitudes towards patients with developmental disabilities? Using Social Power Theory (French & Raven, 1965) as guiding theoretical framework, and informed by original mixed methods research findings, the current study will explore themes in the literature regarding the impact of instructors’ attitudes on medical learners’ attitudes towards individuals with DDs.

**Results:** Though it is recognized in the literature that there is a lack of formal education on developmental disabilities in undergraduate medical education, studies have failed to examine what impact instructors’ attitudes have had on these students. This is crucial, as it has been previously found that instructors’ knowledge, skills and attitudes can have a significant impact on those of their students. Based on preliminary findings, it is anticipated that analysis of the available literature will demonstrate insufficient training on DD, and that students will report feeling pressured to adopt the same attitudes that are held by their instructors.

**Discussion:** As a result of social power, healthcare students’ knowledge and attitudes toward patients with DD may be influenced by those held by their instructors. Medical instructors hold control over reward and punishment of student knowledge and are frequently viewed as possessing expert knowledge in their field. Though this is often true, this belief can result in different learning experiences and attitudes across students, which in turn may impact their treatment of patients with DD.

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