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Title: *Comparing Instructor and Pharmacy Student Assessments of Communication Skills Utilizing the Motivational Interviewing Competency Assessment (MICA)*

Abstract

INTRODUCTION

Proficiency in motivational interviewing (MI) is a growing need for healthcare professionals, yet no guidelines currently exist on how to implement MI into pharmacy curriculums or to how to assess student competency. A history of complex assessment tools has led to the development of the Motivational Interviewing Competency Assessment, or MICA. Despite its simplistic structure and clear-cut criteria on assessing seven core skills of MI, minimal data exists on utilizing the MICA within pharmacy programs. The purpose of this study is to determine the usefulness and practicality of the MICA tool within a pharmacy curriculum to accurately assess student comprehension and application of learned MI skills.

METHODS

First-year pharmacy students (P1's) enrolled at SIUE SOP completed the newly-integrated Patient-Centered Communications course in the fall 2021 semester. Completion of the six-week course required students to submit a video-recorded mock-patient interaction in which the student acted as a provider engaging in conversation with an ambivalent patient. Course instructors evaluated each video interaction using the criteria defined in the MICA manual. Each student also completed a self-assessment over their performance using the MICA tool. Additional skills outside of the MICA were also evaluated in the surveys, and each student was asked to provide information regarding their experience working within a pharmacy. Students were also asked to indicate their perceived understanding as well as comprehension and utilization of their MI skills. All student surveys were administered through Qualtrics, an online survey software.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Seventy-one P1 students at SIUE SOP were included in this study. Overall, the mean (SD) scores of the student assessments was 25.5 (3.9), less than 2 points difference from instructor-given scores of 27.2 (4.1). Most students scored themselves within 4.6 (3.0) points of their instructor score. The general proximity of the scores could indicate that students had a good understanding of what the MICA tool assessed and they were capable of utilizing it to accurately evaluate their own abilities. Higher comprehension of the MICA criteria could also indicate a higher likelihood the student would be able to interpret feedback from the assessment, which would be beneficial to the student as they continue to build on foundational knowledge. The study found that students who had work experience in a pharmacy tended to score higher in both self-assessments and instructor-assessments compared to those with no work experience. Minimal data was found to support any reasoning for highly variable scores. Overall, there was no clear indication in this data on why a student would be more likely to over-score or under-score themselves in their own assessments.

CONCLUSION

The use of the MICA tool should be considered in pharmacy curriculums as a basis to evaluate student comprehension and utilization of MI skills.