

The Evaluation of Student Perceptions and Knowledge After Introducing Medical Cannabis into the Curriculum at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Pharmacy.

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Abstract

Purpose: This study evaluated Southern Illinois University of Edwardsville (SIUE) School of Pharmacy (SOP) third year students before and after the addition of the new medical cannabis course in the required curriculum. The survey's goal was to determine the impact the course had on the perceptions and knowledge of the students. The main objective of this research was to observe the importance of educating pharmacy students about cannabis in response to medical and recreational legalization in Illinois and Missouri.

Methods: The two identical, Likert-style, paper surveys were distributed to 35 students present in class the day of the lecture, one before and one after completion of the material. The 10 questions asked the students to assess their opinions and extent of knowledge on the topic, so researchers could evaluate the degree to which the student perceptions and knowledge transformed after the course.

Results: The first section of student perceptions on pharmacist involvement in the counseling of medical cannabis changed from 97% to 100% after the lecture (p-value 0.003). The second section on student knowledge showed a lack of confidence before the lecture in laws and regulations (58%), drug-interactions (90%), and counseling (84%). Once the course was complete, these students agreed they were more confident in all three aspects (p value <0.005).

Conclusion: The student perceptions before the lecture didn't feel as strongly that pharmacists should be involved in the counseling of medical cannabis. A majority agreed before the lecture, they did not have the knowledge to appropriately educate these patients. The post-lecture surveys show students now feel more strongly that a pharmacist should be involved in the process. They also demonstrated the vast improvement in the students' knowledge and confidence. The addition of the medical cannabis lecture had a positive impact on student perceptions and knowledge. This class is essential to adequately prepare students for their role as drug experts.