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Medical Education

Title

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Preclinical Student Well-being at UCD SOM

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Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Preclinical Student Well-being at UCD SOM



BACKGROUND

- Nationally, students in their pre-clerkship years have been abruptly transitioned to a mostly or entirely virtual educational experience. In this research study, we explored the impacts of this radical and sudden change on medical student well-being.
- How does the COVID-19 pandemic affect this already staggeringly high burn-out rate? To our knowledge, this question has not been thoroughly explored in the literature.
- We hypothesized that the sudden changes in medical education—including the loss of many timed and anticipated traditions, such as physical exam sessions, shadowing, and preceptorships—may potentially have negative effects on the mental health of medical students.

OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate how students feel about the changes to their curriculum and receive feedback on areas for improvement.
- Assess how students feel about their preparedness for USMLE Step 1 examinations and clinical rotations
- Evaluate student burn-out and receive feedback/suggestions on ways to mitigate it

MATERIALS & METHODS

- A 12-question survey was designed using Qualtrics Survey Software
- The survey was distributed to preclinical students at UC Davis via email
- Survey responses were recorded for a total of 12 weeks
- Survey responses were analyzed using Qualtrics Survey Software
- Study design was approved by an internal review board (IRB)

Inclusion criteria:

- Pre-clinical Students at UC Davis School of Medicine were included in this study. This school was chosen because of the authors' institutional affiliation. Other UC schools were not examined due to resource and time limitations.

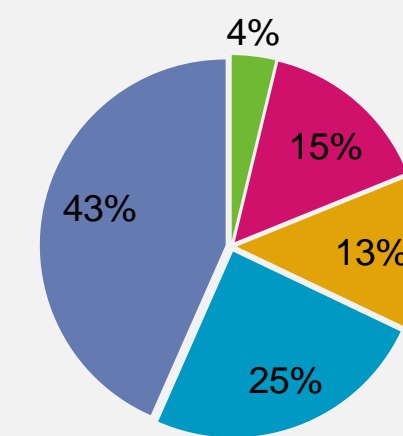
Exclusion Criteria:

- MS3/MS4 students

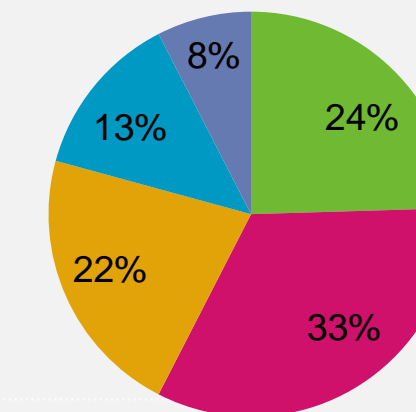
RESULTS

- A total 140 UC Davis preclinical students responded to the survey with 106 students fully completing the survey
- Seventy-four (52%) students self-reported to be MS1's, and 66 (47%) of students were MS2's
- For the question "how would you rate your overall satisfaction in medical school on a scale of 1-10?" average score for before the pandemic was 8.06±1.49 (n=50), satisfaction during the pandemic was 5.9±2.34 (n=51).

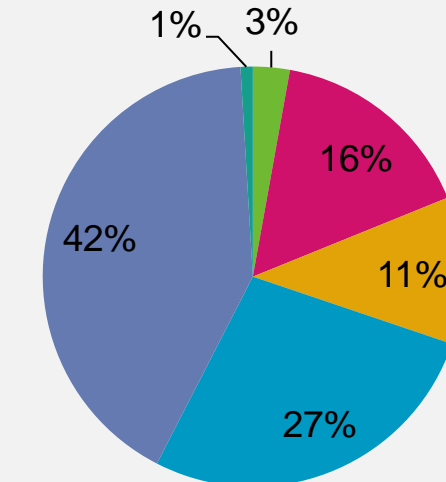
I am still able to explore a variety of different medical fields and specialties.



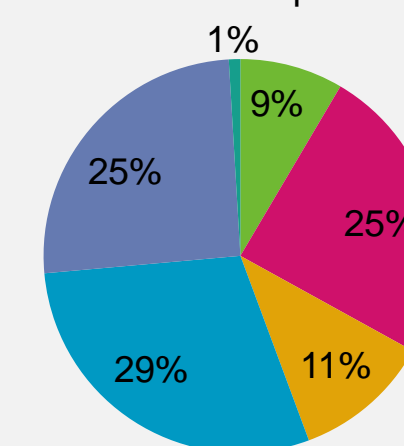
I feel that I am getting a substandard education because of the new curriculum



I am provided ample opportunities to practice clinical skills



I am still able to learn at least as effectively over Zoom/online as I would in person



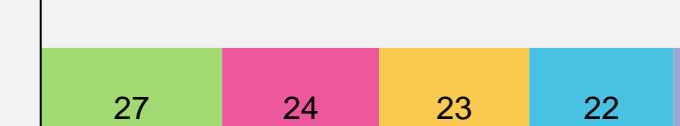
I feel burned out or emotionally exhausted from medical school.



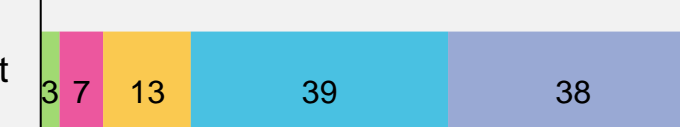
I feel supported by my institution.



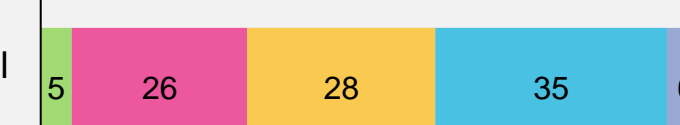
This pandemic has increased my anxiety about the future (e.g. USMLE Step 1, clinical clerkships).



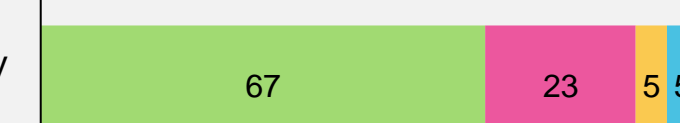
I feel like my institution does not care about me.



I am able to prioritize my mental health and wellbeing.



I feel "Zoom-fatigue" after a full day of content.



PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS

Always Most of the time About half the time Sometimes Never

CONCLUSIONS

- A majority of students (55%) feel they are getting a substandard education overall
- Areas of greatest deficit were in professional development/career exploration and clinical skills
- Seventy-one percent of students reported feeling burned out at least half of the time or more with 99% of students also encountering some level of "Zoom Fatigue"
- Students had increased anxiety surrounding future milestones (clerkships, USMLE Step 1) which could be due to lost clinical opportunities or experiences
- Students mostly (75%) felt supported by their institution at least half of the time
- Most students (94%) were able to prioritize mental health at least some of the time

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