Analyzing the Role of Anxiety in Medical Students at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine

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Introduction

- The University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine is one of the few 6 year combined B.A/M.D programs in the country.

- A student-led study was conducted to observe the incidence of anxiety stratified to each year of the medical program.

- The aim is to provide a foundation for using data driven studies to implement change into the medical curriculum to improve anxiety levels of students in the program.
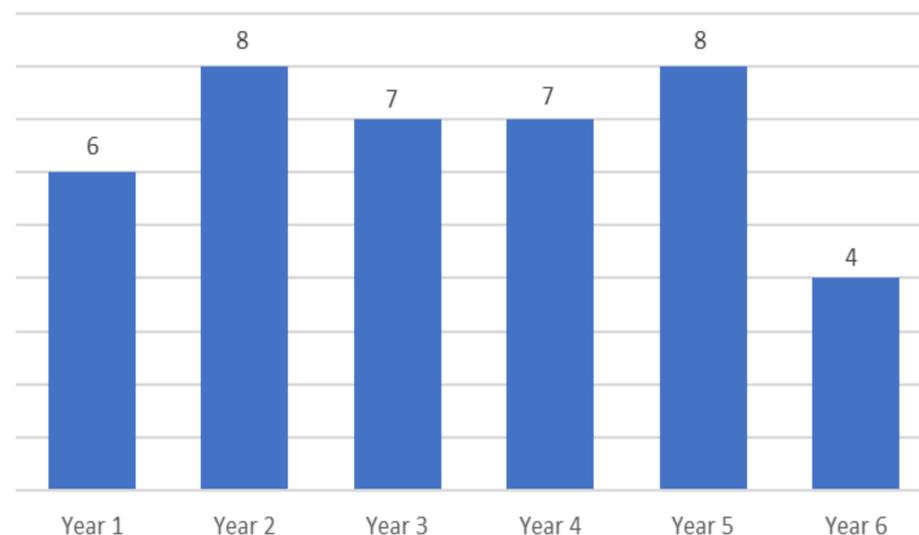
Methodology

Participants:
- BA/MD and MD only medical students enrolled in the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine

- The cross sectional survey was comprised of 405/690 or 59% of all students from all six years of the program.

- After UMKC IRB approval, students were approached via informational class meetings, emails, and social media during the survey period.

- The study was anonymous, voluntary, and no personal information identifiers beside year in the program were obtained.
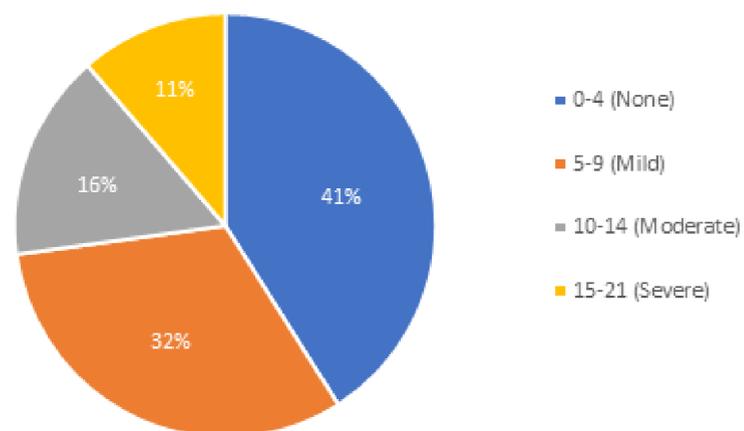
Standardized Instrument:
- Seven questions from the GAD-7 were posed to the participants relating to symptoms of nervousness, inability to control worrying, worrying about multiple topics, trouble relaxing, restlessness, irritability, and feelings of dread over the previous two weeks.

- Each question was rated on a scale of 0 (Not at all), 1 (Several days), 2 (More than half the days), and 3 (Nearly every day) and then a total score was calculated by adding the ratings of each item to get a total score ranging from 0 to 21.

Results

Average GAD-7 Scores Per Year of Medical School

Overall Breakdown of GAD-7 Scores at UMKC SOM

Conclusion

- The GAD-7 has been reported as having a sensitivity of 89% and specificity of 82% for Generalized Anxiety Disorder.

- There is a degree of anxiety present in every class, with Year 6 being the outlier. These values are very fluid as Year 6's low anxiety scores can be explained by completing rank list submissions and now simply waiting until Match Day. In comparison, Year 2's high anxiety scores could be because they are in the midst of the challenging Human Structure & Function course series.

- 26% of UMKC medical students scored a 10 or greater indicating they would qualify for further assessment and possible treatment for anxiety.

- Coping strategies identified in the survey included exercise, meditation, talking with family/friends, medication, and therapy. Unhealthy coping behaviors were also identified such as cutting, binging and/or starvation, and nicotine or alcohol use.

References

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- SPSS version 25, Chicago, Illinois with special thanks to Stephen Simon

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