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Basic Life Support and Opioid Overdose Management: Knowledge and Attitudes Among Students Matriculating into Medical School - A Cross-Sectional Analysis to Inform Curricular Change

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Purpose:

While Basic Life Support (BLS) skills are typically included in undergraduate medical education (UME) curricula, graduating students continue to demonstrate substandard skills retention. In the setting of the opioid epidemic, effective opioid overdose management (OOM) training should likewise take place during UME. To date, there is a paucity of literature that describes incoming medical students' knowledge and attitudes on these topics prior to beginning their studies. The purpose of this study is to describe medical students' knowledge and attitudes towards BLS and OOM prior to their medical training to inform curricular change in UME.

Methods:

We conducted an observational, cross-sectional study of 1st-year medical students at a major academic medical school in Philadelphia, the epicenter of the opioid epidemic. Survey items assessed participants' knowledge and attitudes on BLS and OOM. The survey was voluntary and deployed through Qualtrics.

Results and Conclusions:

258 students of 272 (95% response rate) completed the survey. 32% of respondents had been previously certified in BLS / ACLS, and only 15% had previously received any level of OOM training. Students reported a moderate comfort level with administering chest compressions (5.14$\pm$2.9 [Likert Scale 1-10, 10=most comfortable]); and a low comfort level using an AED (4.80$\pm$3.1) or assisting an opioid victim (3.74$\pm$3.1). Up to 74% failed to correctly answer knowledge-based questions regarding basic management principles. Matriculating students do not have adequate BLS or OOM knowledge upon entering medical school, but wish to have these skills taught to them during their pre-clinical training. Findings should inform UME curricular changes to address the growing opioid epidemic.