A Virtual Educational Intervention Addressing Weight Bias in Medical Students

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Gina Goldberg, Joseph Majdan, MD*

(**) indicates another student who is declaring the same project as primary for SI
Introduction

• Individuals with higher body weight experience severe and pervasive discrimination in nearly every walk of life

• Stigmatizing treatment from healthcare providers leads to poor health outcomes
• Approaches in existing literature
  – Increasing understanding of the **uncontrollability of obesity**
  – **Induction of Empathy** for individuals with obesity
  – Increasing awareness of **implicit biases** toward people with obesity
  – Decreasing the social acceptability of weight bias

• No existing studies include
  – Personal testimony of Physician Mentor
  – Virtual, self-guided format
• Research Question
  – Does a virtual educational session about obesity influence the explicit attitudes and implicit biases of medical students towards people with higher body weight?

• Hypothesis
  – Explicit attitudes towards people with higher body weight will improve after a virtual educational session about overweight and obesity. Implicit attitudes may not change.
Approach

- **Population**
  - SKMC students

- **Intervention**
  - Virtual session
    - Biological basis (**uncontrollability of obesity**)
    - Personal experience (**induction of empathy**)

- **Data Source and Collection**
  - Implicit Associations Test (**implicit bias**)
  - Universal Measure of Bias Questionnaire (explicit bias)
  - Demographic questions
• **Universal Measure of Bias (UMB) Findings**
  
  – Shift away from higher explicit bias toward lower explicit bias
  
  • 6.2% average decrease in explicit bias
Implicit Associations Test (IAT) Findings

- Overall shift away from automatic preference for lower weight people toward automatic preference for higher weight people
  - 7.7% average change in preference overall (n=27)
  - 11.8% average change in preference in those who started with an automatic preference for lower weight people (n=22)
Conclusions

• Preliminary data suggest that both explicit and implicit bias tend to decrease after our virtual intervention
• Accessible, brief way to address weight bias in SKMC students
• Limitations
  – No control group (pre-post intervention study)
  – Tests, intervention dependent on full attention
Future Directions

• Data analysis
  – Relationships between explicit and implicit data
  – Demographics – self-reported weight status, gender identity, age, race/ethnicity, class year
• Follow-up in 3-6 months
• Easily scalable
  – Role of relationship with Dr. Majdan
    • Medical students at other schools
    • Other medical professionals
• Incorporation into JeffMD curriculum
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References