



INTRODUCTION:

- Homeless individuals are 4X more likely to be visually impaired and are less likely to access ophthalmic care than the general population
- This could be because homeless individuals feel stigmatized, shamed and unwelcomed by members of the health care system
- This is concerning because implicit biases impact the quality of clinical care
- The objective of this research study was to investigate the attitudes of Canadian ophthalmology residents (PGY1-PGY5) and pre-clerkship medical students (year 1 and year 2) at University of Toronto towards homeless individuals

METHODS (INSTRUMENT):

- Medical students and residents were sent the Health Professionals' Attitudes Towards the Homeless Inventory (HPATHI) (Fig. 1)
- The HPATHI was 9 'Attitude' items, 5 'Interest' items and 4 'Confidence' items
- Participants were asked to respond to each item on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree)
- For the purposes of our study, a score of 1-2 was considered a negative perception, 3 a neutral perception and 4-5 a positive perception

HPATHI Questions

Attitude Questions

- Homeless People are Victims of Circumstances
- Homeless people have the right to basic health care
- Homelessness is a major problem in our society
- I understand that my patients' priorities may be more important to them than following my medical recommendations
- Health-care dollars should be directed toward serving the poor and homeless
- Doctors should address the physical and social problems of the homeless
- I believe social justice is an important part of health care
- Homeless people are lazy (reverse)
- Homeless people choose to be homeless (reverse)

Interest Questions

- I entered medicine because I want to help those in need
- I am interested in working with the underserved
- I enjoy addressing psychosocial issues with patients
- I enjoy learning about the lives of my homeless patients
- I resent the amount of time it takes to see homeless patients (reverse)

Confidence Questions

- I am comfortable being a primary care provider for a homeless person with a major mental illness
- I feel comfortable being part of a team when providing care to the homeless
- I feel comfortable providing care to different minority and cultural groups
- I feel overwhelmed by the complexity of the problems that homeless people have (reverse)

Fig. 1 HPATHI Items

METHODS (ANALYSIS):

- A main analysis compared ophthalmology residents to pre-clerkship medical students
- A sub group analysis considered interns (PGY1) and junior residents (PGY2-3) versus senior residents (PGY 4-5)
- Individual items on the HPATHI were compared between participant groups using both the Mann-Whitney U (median/interquartile range) and Fisher exact test (% agreement vs. other responses)
- Items 8, 9, 14 and 18 were reverse coded for the Mann-Whitney U test so that for every item on the HPATHI, a higher score indicated a more positive perception towards homeless individuals.
- A 'holistic' analysis of each theme (i.e. Attitude, Interest, Confidence) was also done considering the means of each item within each theme

RESULTS (PARTICIPATION):

Pre-Clerkship Students (n = 534)	Ophthalmology Residents (n = 220)
Year 1: 164/266 (62%)	PGY1: 26/43 (60%)
Year 2: 151/268 (56%)	PGY2: 22/45 (49%)
-	PGY3: 18/43 (42%)
-	PGY4: 26/45 (58%)
-	PGY5: 22/44 (50%)

Fig. 2 HPATHI Response Rate

RESULTS (MAIN & SUB GROUP ANALYSIS):

- Compared to medical students, ophthalmology residents had significantly more negative 'attitudes' (pre-clerk median=4.4, resident median=4.1, both indicating positive attitudes) and 'interests' (pre-clerk median=4.0, resident median=3.3, residents with more neutral interests)
- Considering both statistical tests, Ophthalmology residents were more negative in 7/9 'Attitude' items, 5/ 5 'Interest' items and 1/4 'Confidence' items
- There was no statistical difference in any of the themes when comparing interns and junior residents to senior residents
- Senior residents were more negative than interns and junior residents in 1/5 'Confidence' items

CONCLUSIONS:

- Ophthalmology residents have more negative perceptions towards homeless individuals than pre-clerkship medical students, while the data are comparable within the residency program
- Work with academic leaders is needed to ensure greater exposure and advocacy in post-graduate education



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References