



Enhancing LGBTQ+ Medical Student Well-Being and Healthcare Utilization through the Development of a Peer Health Navigation Program: A Pilot Project

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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Over 40% of LGBTQ+ medical students report concealing sexual identity due to fear of discrimination [1]
- Sexual minority medical students have increased rates of anxiety, depression, lower self-esteem and levels of burn-out relative to their heterosexual peers [2] [3]
- Peer navigation is well-established for enhancing well-being and health care utilization, and is a culturally responsive approach [4]

RESEARCH PURPOSES

- Understand diverse health professional student barriers to care and needs for access to health and wellness resources
- Obtain faculty and student input to and receptivity of developing a Peer Health Navigation (PHN) program.
- Design PHN program to provide culturally competent health and resource navigation and emotional first-aid to students, considering the intersection of racism, sexism, heterosexism, transphobia, and ableist bias

RESEARCH METHODS

- This project utilized multiple methods to understand the issues facing health professional students and to inform intervention development, which included:
- Faculty discussions identifying barriers to and considerations for medical students delivering peer support
 - Conversations with leaders of student affinity groups to obtain their input on needs and program design
 - Extend PHN applications to all medical students and identify their motivations for participating

METHODS and FINDINGS

Faculty and Student Wellness Leadership discussions for identifying potential barriers:

Student affinity group leader discussions for identifying health barriers and needs:

Applications for PHN interest:

- Students lack qualifications to provide mental health counseling directly to peers
- Program structure would need to reduce burden on peer navigators and facilitate self-care
- Students desire guidance from peers with similar lived experiences for accessing health services
- Recruited peer navigators should reflect diverse identity populations
- Student affinity groups provided input on gaps in and barriers to utilization of resources affecting their communities
- 50% of 30 PHN applicants indicated a special identification with/desire to support LGBTQIA+ peers

PROGRAM/COURSE DESIGN

A consensus was reached on program design and plans for training among student affinity group leaders, wellness leadership and faculty

- Proposed Content for PHN Training:** Available institutional and community health and wellness resources; Mental Health First Aid; Culturally competent communication; Addressing confidentiality and privacy; LGBTQIA+ health, historic & present barriers to healthcare
- PHNs will learn how to assist students during designated office hours via a chat feature, phone calls, and emails
- Scope of Practice:**
 - Navigating students to culturally responsive health services and wellness resources within the university and local community as well as provide immediate emotional support

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- Students are receptive to the PHN program
- Our PHN program offers a model that can be utilized by other medical campuses to make healthcare resources more accessible to students with multiple intersecting stigmatized identities
- Program training spans institutional health resources, culturally competent communication skills, contextualization of LGBTQIA+ experience in US healthcare, and basics in providing mental health first aid

NEXT STEPS/ FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Assess the self-efficacy of trained PHNs in providing empathetic and culturally competent communication and health navigation
- Obtain feedback via an anonymous survey circulated to support recipients
- Log focus of encounters
- Evaluations will inform program outcome success and future adaptations

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