Reducing the Stigma of Mental Illness Among Medical Students

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Reducing the Stigma of Mental Illness Among Medical Students

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Abstract
The American Osteopathic Association House of Delegates Resolution 205 recommends “increased awareness of the disorder among U.S. medical schools...” due to the growing body of research describing the role of depression, anxiety, and mental health stigma on medical school and student outcomes. The recent re-ignition of the national conversation on race, diversity, and mental health has focused medical schools on existing mental health issues. Emotions, behaviors, and circumstances can impact mental health. Medical schools and osteopathic education programs have the opportunity to create a safe environment in order to prevent further harm to students. The present study evaluated the impact on student mental health awareness and stigma of a student-run symposium on mental health.

Introduction
Medical schools are at a crucial juncture to provide a prevention program towards reducing mental health issues. Approximately 50% of medical students experience depression at some point during medical school, and 19% experience suicide ideation compared to the 10% of the general population in the same medical student age group.2 While suicide is the extreme end of the personal distress continuum, medical schools have a responsibility to be aware of these numbers and work towards preventions and support.3

It is common knowledge that the reported mental health among medical students and ultimately health care providers might lead to poor patient care.4 The consequences to society are financial (the cost of a fem boy of mental health).5 A population that doesn’t have the means to treat depression has a negative impact on their health care providers.5 In July 2011, the American Osteopathic Association House of Delegates Resolution 205, entitled “R eports: Mental health: Recommendations for medical schools”, was adopted.6 The resolutions recommended the implementation of mental health curricula in medical schools, an evaluation of student mental health status, and a system to identify signs of distress and provide assistance to students during medical school.6

The tool assessed students’ feelings regarding a vignette describing a mentally ill woman. After a four-part survey was completed, 113 students, 89 of whom also completed the post-assessment survey, were included in the analysis. The surveys were provided by the University of California San Francisco School of Medicine and adapted for this event.

Materials and Methods

The Am erican Osteopathic Association House of Delegates Resolution 205 recom mends “increased awareness of depress -...