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Title

Networks of Support for Under-Represented Minority Students through a Prematriculation Program Promoting Primary Care

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Education and training

Presenters

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Abstract

Context: In 2012 the Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine Prematriculation Program was one of the first programs of its kind to bring under-represented minority (URM) medical students from both urban and rural backgrounds together for a preparatory course prior to the beginning of a medical school curriculum. Designed to promote a successful transition to medical school, this program contains both academic components and activities to encourage connection between peers. By providing intentional opportunities to build these networks and expose rising students to their near-peers who have seek to practice primary care in residency, this program generates social capital that URM students can draw from while experiencing the stresses of medical school and choosing a future specialty. Objective: To investigate the impact of this Prematriculation program on the networking, support mechanisms and social capital of URM students transitioning to medical school and specialty choice.

Study Design: Mixed-methods anonymous online survey of program participants from 2014 -2019.

Setting: USA-based osteopathic medical school.

Population Studied: URM medical students from urban and rural backgrounds who participated in a Prematriculation program. Outcome Measures: Student identified sources of support during their transition to medical school. Results: Of the 53 participants, 55.93% identified as African American and 13.96% identified as Hispanic. Female students represented 61.70% of the sample, and 92.31% came from non-physician households. Of program participants, 28/47 (59.6%) had indicated that they intended to pursue a primary care specialty after graduation. Students stated that this program prepared them both academically and socially for the transition to medical school and helped them to look ahead at career choices early. Specifically, students identified peer and near-peer mentoring, exposure to career choices and mentors in primary care specialties, faculty connections, and physical familiarity with campus as significant sources of social capital that were cultivated during this program. Conclusions: Prematriculation programs can serve as a significant source of social capital for URM medical students by promoting supportive peer, near-peer, and early career support systems prior to

beginning formal medical curriculum. Our study illustrated that such a program had significant impact on their medical school performance and future care.