Empathy Behind the Scenes: Training future healthcare providers to treat opioid use disorder with a focus on patient narrative through forum theatre

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Methods

N=109 students (n=83, med students; n=26, nurse practitioner students) engaged in training to obtain a DATA waiver, which will allow them to prescribe buprenorphine in any medical setting and methadone in methadone clinics in the future. Following this training, students observed Joey in a live one-hour performance via Zoom. Students were not only exposed to the unique obstacles of recovery but were also able to insert themselves into the action, transforming from passive observers into active participants. This content-based instructional method utilized forum theatre methodology to enable learners to "rehearse for reality." The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the impact of forum theatre as a medical education training modality.

Introduction

Future healthcare professionals commonly draw a great deal of their knowledge from didactic instruction and hands-on training, but focus continues to shift to the value of placing learners in innovative settings in order to hone their skills and better relate to the patients they treat. Rather than working with standardized patients in clinical settings, this study allowed students to observe and participate in a staged play outlining the challenges faced by a character named Joey who is in early recovery from opioid use disorder. Following medication for opioid use disorder case training, students followed Joey in a live one-hour performance via Zoom. Students were not only exposed to the unique obstacles of recovery but were also able to insert themselves into the action, transforming from passive observers into active participants. This content-based instructional method utilized forum theatre methodology to enable learners to "rehearse for reality." The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the impact of forum theatre as a medical education training modality.

Preliminary Results

Favorite Part of the Play

- Complex and insightful narratives
- Production was authentic, well-acted, and high quality
- Personal connection to narrative enhanced effect
- Appreciated critical discussion of the production

Least Favorite Part of the Play

- Preferred direct accounts to theatrical interpretation
- Lacked understanding of Forum Theatre
- Difficult to suspend disbelief
- Would have preferred in-person performance
- Play was too long

Promoted Empathy

- Provided insight into recovery experience
- Provided insight into patients' personal challenges
- Exposed spectators to patient home life
- Opportunities to apply empathy in practice
- Inclusion of diverse and unique perspectives

References