

Trainees' Experience with a Poverty Simulation

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Purpose:

Health disparities disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, particularly the poor and elderly. The purpose of this longitudinal study is to assess shifts in the attitudes of University of Iowa Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) students, nursing students, and faculty/ staff regarding treating underserved populations based on an educational model that incorporates a poverty simulation as component of their education.

Methods:

A total of 410 LEND and nursing students were invited to participate in a poverty simulation between the years of 2019-2023. A 20-question survey measuring participants' beliefs regarding poverty on a 5-point Likert scale was administered immediately before and after the simulation. The responses from both surveys were paired to evaluate changes in beliefs. Statistical analysis included Bowker's symmetry test and weighted Kappa statistic ($\alpha=0.05$). Weighted kappa coefficient is defined as a measure of agreement between two sets of ordinal scaled responses obtained from both pre- and post-surveys.

Results:

The study comprised 385 participants who completed both pre- and post-surveys. Shifts in responses between pre- and post-surveys were observed for sixteen questions ($P<.05$ in each instance). Notably, 201 subjects (52%) responded empathetically to 16 or more of the 20 questions prior to the simulation while 288 (75%) provided empathetic responses to 16 or more questions after the simulation. Levels of agreement ranged from $\kappa=0.62$ to $\kappa=0.16$ indicating that changes of opinions about poverty occurred after participating in the poverty simulation.

Conclusions:

Engaging in a poverty simulation can educate future healthcare professionals about the challenges faced by patients living in poverty and foster the development of empathy towards these individuals

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