Evaluating the Impact of Cognitive Test Anxiety on NAPLEX and Didactic Curriculum Performance: a Multi-site Study

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BACKGROUND

Approximately 21% or 1 out of 5 students in the National college health assessment indicated being diagnosed with anxiety.

College students mental health is becoming a growing concern among higher education faculty members and universities with anxiety and depression being the most common issues students face.

Test anxiety reasonably may follow similar trends among our students and has potential to seriously affect student performance and well being with multiple negative correlations to student well being and academic performance.

Cognitive interference model suggests that anxious students perform worse on exams not due to intellectual ability, but rather that the brain cannot focus on task relevant material due to the flurry of task-irrelevant thoughts that steal working memory.

Pharmacy students similar to other professions must successfully pass a single high-stakes exam the North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination (NAPLEX) to practice pharmacy.

METHODS

Researchers from 5 Schools of Pharmacy will deliver a survey containing the Cognitive Test Anxiety Scale-2 (CTAS-2) to 4th year pharmacy students who voluntarily participate.

RESULTS will be correlated to NAPLEX performance along with other measures that have been correlated to academic success in pharmacy education.

CTAS-2 scores range from 0 to 96 with higher numbers indicating greater test anxiety.

Evidence based ranges of test anxiety cut offs:

- Low test anxiety (CTAS-2: 24-43)
- Moderate test anxiety (CTAS-2: 44-66)
- High test anxiety (CTAS-2: 67 and above)

PURPOSE

To evaluate the prevalence and impact of cognitive test anxiety on student pharmacists.

DISCUSSION

Test anxiety may affect more pharmacy students than faculty or students currently realize.

Given the magnitude of consequences financial and otherwise to students who unsuccessfully attempt the NAPLEX or worse do not matriculate through the program.

Test anxiety although not the sole contributor may be one of the easier contributors to modulate the effect of.

If negative correlations are found between CTAS-2 and academic performance it may be reasonable to consider screening students for test anxiety.

Interventions for test anxiety exist and many are easy and could be implemented with little faculty or student effort.

REFERENCES