

USING MEDICAL IMPROVISATION TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AND DECISION MAKING AMONG CLINICIANS

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Background: Medical Improv is an emerging field in which the principles and training techniques of improvisational theater are used to improve spontaneous thinking, communication, and teamwork in the practice of medicine. In Medical Improv, students are constantly putting new concepts into action, experimenting with new skills, adjusting to failures, and incorporating feedback. The flow from concept to skill to integrated practice is immediate and constant. This aims to improve the clinician's ability to collaborate with others, focusing on behaviors that create productive and trusting partnerships.

Objectives: Using the principles and techniques of improvisational theater, to foster

- a) the cognitive capacity and flexibility needed to evaluate and acquire reliable clinical information,
- b) the ability to actively and generously observe and listen to another,
- c) the ability to communicate empathically with others in order to create an environment in which she or he feels safe, satisfied and heard.

Methods:

- 1) Students participate in improv exercises that coach specific skill sets:
 - i) portraying varied social status;
 - ii) improving and directing attention;
 - iii) telling stories;
 - iv) working as a team.
- 2) Post-session feedback obtained through Qualtrics surveys on the day of the event and one month later.

Results/Outcomes/Improvements: We ran seven workshops, with a total of 92 participants. Of these, 58 were students, and the remainder were faculty and staff. Participants were from multiple disciplines and schools including medicine, physician assistant program, nursing, physical therapy, and divinity. We had an 80% response rate to the surveys on the day of the workshop and one month later. The majority gave narrative feedback about the experience, with comments overwhelmingly positive:

"The improv is so different than classical medical training - makes you more conscious on how you might potentially impact patients, families and coworkers."

"I think that doing improv forced me to engage in conversations where I cannot predict what is going to happen ... I think this translates to an ability to find satisfaction in unpredictable patient conversations instead of dreading them."

Significance/Implications/Relevance: Because of the success of these workshops, and the positive feedback we received from participants, we have planned another 6-8 workshops for the upcoming year. In addition, we are working with residency leaders to develop a series of weekend conferences for residents, incorporating Medical Improv to address ongoing issues of burnout and patient satisfaction. Finally, based on local success, we invited leaders in Medical Improv from around the country to a meeting at Duke to organize a national consortium that will provide resources and training for other institutions that wish to incorporate Medical Improv into clinician training.