Understanding Medical Students’ Beliefs on Abortion and Sexual Reproduction

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: As a controversial topic in American society, abortion occupies a precarious place in medical school curricula. Although medical students believe abortion is a valid and acceptable topic, fewer than 20% of U.S. medical schools offer formal abortion education in either the pre-clinical or clinical years. Only 40% provide abortion lectures during clerkships.

According to the Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics, student learning objectives, abortion education should be included at a minimum in the third year core clerkship. In the absence of published curricula, health professional schools must develop their own methods to teach the medical aspects of the subject, while respecting all points of view.

METHODS: Second year medical students enrolled in Practice of Medicine, Problem Oriented Case-Based Learning (PCL) attended a required ethics lecture, during which they used an audience response system to answer questions. Their answers were tabulated to measure the range of student opinions. Students were then invited to post questions to the library blog.

RESULTS: At the end of the case, 140 students completed the survey, and 112 consented to have their responses analyzed for research purposes.

SURVEY RESULTS: There was a balanced representation of pro-choice views.

Figure 1: I feel better equipped now to discuss abortion with my patients

Figure 2: Counseling patients with different points of view from your own.

Figure 3: Identifying the physicians’ role with respect to abortion

Figure 4: The topic of abortion should be part of the medical curriculum

Figure 5: Identifying the physicians’ role with respect to abortion

Figure 6: The topic of abortion should be part of the medical curriculum

CONCLUSION: Case based learning, a framing lecture, and a safe place to express and challenge opinions together constitute an effective strategy for introducing a controversial topic in medical education.

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References


