Physician Assistant Students as Health Educators for Adolescents

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INTRODUCTION: Over the last 15 years, WSU PA students have been teaching West High School students a series of health modules. Through this relationship, PA students have the opportunity to work toward effective communication and motivational skills that are valuable for future care with adolescent patients.

PURPOSE: Determine the effectiveness of WSU PA students as health educators to West High School students.

METHODS: Five health modules were created by a group of WSU PA students in 2016 by utilizing the CDC Winnable Battles, Healthy People 2020, and the most common cause of death among US teenagers with the intent to encourage high school students to live safer and healthier lives. A survey was created using a Likert scale design and IRB approval for students to complete before and after the module presentations. Descriptive analysis was used to determine the impact of the information presented.

RESULTS: Each module showed an increase in percentage of positive responses, with some modules having more pronounced changes than others. The module with the greatest percent change was the Mental Health Module.

CONCLUSION: The involvement of PA students in the education of high school students on healthcare related topics dually strengthens the PA student and the high school student. PA students gain skills and the high school students can gain understanding of common health concerns appropriate for their age group.