



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
College of Medicine
Tucson

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: RAISING AWARENESS OF MEDICAL STUDENT MISTREATMENT

Layne M. Jordan BS¹, Amy Sussman MD^{1,2}, Julia Jernberg MD^{1,2}

1. University of Arizona College of Medicine-Tucson, Tucson, AZ 2. University of Arizona Tucson Department of Medicine



BACKGROUND

"It's Not Okay" was an initiative led by a medical student (LMG) who experienced sexual harassment while on a clinical rotation. The experience of harassment and mistreatment is far too common for medical students across the country-- and the AAMC graduation questionnaire showed no significant decrease in the past decade.

As the student began to speak honestly about the experience with classmates, similar experiences of racist comments, sexual harassment and general mistreatment were echoed back to her. She hoped that if everyone knew the frequency and severity of inappropriate comments made to medical students, they would be inspired to stand together and demand change. This project was the result.

OBJECTIVES

- To increase awareness of the frequency and severity of medical student mistreatment among faculty members
- To empower informed advocacy and to promote deep cultural change
- To increase empathy through use of student narratives

METHODS

- 3rd & 4th year medical students were told of this project and invited to submit quotes of painful comments they had experienced that they would like heard by faculty and deans; submissions were anonymous via online survey and received by LMG
- 52 comments were submitted. 30 Comments were selected by a committee of students, faculty and residents on the bases of impact and ability to maintain anonymity
- Intro and Outro scripts were written with the most recent data detailing the extent and impact of student mistreatment, the goals of the video, and next steps for viewers to take to address bias and mistreatment
- Faculty in positions of leadership and those who had the most contact with medical students were asked to volunteer via an email. They were told that they would be filmed reading 5 student quotes for the first time. This would enable us to capture their reactions to the quotes that were reported by students
 - 17 faculty members from 8 departments participated in filming
 - Dean, College of Medicine
 - 4 Vice Deans
 - 3 Assistant Deans
 - 3 Department Chairs
 - 4 clerkship directors
- Student testimonial was written, filmed and added to the beginning of the video to allay concerns about the impact of the film on potential students
- Held focus groups of faculty and focus groups of students for feedback on the optimal way to distribute the video

RESULTS

Video Format:

- Student Testimonial-** MS4 LMG discussed mistreatment and reason for making film
- Scripted Intro-- multiple faculty speakers read aloud the following facts:**
 - Medical student mistreatment issue first addressed in JAMA in 1982.⁵
 - 2020 AAMC Graduation Questionnaire (GQ), nearly 40% of graduating medical students reported experiencing mistreatment during training.¹
 - Women, racial /ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ students are disproportionately affected^{1,4}
 - Mistreatment during training is linked to increased burnout, substance abuse, depression and suicide.^{2,3,4}
 - As this is a nationwide problem that needs to be addressed, it is imperative to lead by example in acknowledging medical student mistreatment, sexism, and racism. Denying that there is an issue denies the opportunity for treatment.
 - The quotes in the video were made to medical students in recent years, not in the distant past. The faculty members who read the comments were NOT the ones who made these comments. They were invited to read because of their allyship and commitment to fostering a more inclusive environment. They were filmed as they read the comments for the very first time.

3. Examples of Quotes Submitted by Students:

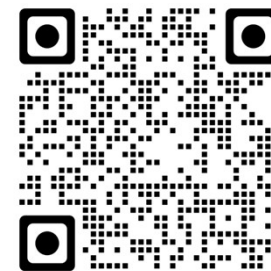
- "Your parents are immigrants? In my opinion, only children of physicians should be allowed in medical school, because the Hippocratic Oath states we should keep medical knowledge within an elite group."**
- "You got into medical school on your first try? Not bad for a white girl. Oh wait, you're mixed race? Well, that explains it."**
- "I had to worry about my scores--but it doesn't even matter for you. They'll take you because it's all about diversity now."**
- "You're a girl but you do okay. You'd probably get eaten up in a surgery residency, though."**
- "Why is it that women never actually make up their mind? Is uncertainty built into the second X chromosome?"**
- "You won't amount to anything in life. You should give up on medicine and start making TikToks for a living."**

4. Unscripted Responses by Reading Faculty:

- After reading the quotes, the majority of faculty members expressed dismay and incredulity
- "It's difficult to believe that people I may be interacting with might be saying these comments"
 - "I'm disillusioned that people still believe like this. It's unacceptable"
 - "We have to change the culture"
 - "There's a lot of work to do"

5. Scripted Outro -- multiple faculty speakers read aloud the following statements:

- Thanked the medical students who submitted the comments & apologized to students for their experience
- In 2020, 74.1% of students across the U.S. who reported mistreatment on the AAMC GQ did not report mistreatment to their institution, with many citing fear of reprisal.
 - These and similar comments are not acceptable and do not reflect the values of UACOMT
 - It is every individual's responsibility to reflect on the role that we play in condoning this behavior and to reflect on what we can do to stop it.
 - Join this effort: learn more about participating in our Confronting Bias and ACT-UP, which provide education on how to intervene when witnessing acts of bias and how to be good stewards of our teams following acts of bias.



LINK TO VIDEO



Word cloud of faculty responses after reading comments

DISCUSSION

- Medical student mistreatment continues to persist at unacceptable rates.
- Hearing direct quotes experienced by students had a significant impact on both students and faculty
- It is imperative to educate teaching faculty, not only of the prevalence, but also to provide examples of the magnitude of inappropriate comments and the devastating effect these have on students.
- This film has been screened for all UACOMT faculty and students. Faculty plan to continue showing the readings of quotes portraying student mistreatment. This film has already instigated local cultural change. To "hear" what students heard is a powerful motivator.

NEXT STEPS

- The film served as the main focus of the UACOMT general all-faculty quarterly meeting.
- The video has been incorporated into "Confronting Bias" training and presented by ODEI to 21 departments and sections thus far
- Screening of the video to 4th year medical students is scheduled; we plan to elicit their feedback on how and when in the curriculum the video should be shown to students
- The video will be used as a catalyst for reforming the mistreatment reporting system by showing the effectiveness of reporting and the importance of enforced remediation.

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