Using Improv as a Tool for Fostering Mentorship Among Medical and Pre-medical Students

Matt Schwartz, Kathleen Herring, Jakob Feeney, Amy Baldwin, & Edwin Sperr
Augusta University/University of Georgia Medical Partnership – Athens, Georgia

Problem Statement

There are few current opportunities for direct mentorship between medical students at the Augusta University/University of Georgia Medical Partnership (Medical Partnership) and pre-medical students at the University of Georgia (UGA), despite the fact that the two campuses are in the same city and only minutes apart. It is unclear what barriers exist to mentorship and how mentorship can best benefit students.

Background

There were two series of improv workshops held: one in the fall on the UGA campus and one in the spring on the AU/UGA Medical Partnership campus.

Students were contacted via email on the pre-medical student list-servers, and advertisements were delivered to pre-medical advising classes.

The workshop format was loosely based on the project previously done using improv to improve communication skills among medical residents.1

A focus group session was held at the conclusion of the workshops to assess the viability of using improv as a tool to foster mentorship and to perform a needs assessment for future interventions.

Methods

Fall workshop series:
- 4 sessions were held, with average attendance of 5 pre-medical students
- Overall, the students enjoyed the sessions and had positive feedback

Spring workshop series:
- None of the sessions were attended by pre-medical students

Barriers to implementation identified:
- Scheduling was difficult because of lack of access to a complete UGA academic calendar
- Holding sessions on Medical Partnership campus was a deterrent for pre-medical students
- Medical student availability was difficult to ascertain and work around

Focus group suggestions and feedback:
- Great degree of satisfaction with improv workshops
- Offer food!
- Advertise development of Multiple Mini Interview (MMI) skills
- Interest in MCAT, interview, and AMCAS advice was high

Summary

- Improv theatre has the potential to be an effective way to foster mentorship among students throughout their medical training.
- Several barriers and suggestions for improvement were identified which provide a direction for future study.
- Additional data will help determine the most effective way to utilize improv to foster mentorship among pre-medical and medical students.

References

