

# **DEVELOPING A MENTAL HEALTH CURRICULUM WITH A FOCUS ON CULTURE FOR VOLUNTEERS AT A STUDENT-RUN PRIMARY CARE FREE CLINIC SERVING PRIMARILY HISPANIC PATIENTS**

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**Background:** Haven Free Clinic is a student-run primary care free clinic associated with Yale University School of Medicine, and one of the services given is Behavioral Health (BHD). Students at BHD provide screening for anxiety, depression, suicide, individual psychoeducation sessions, and tools for overcoming mental health problems. Haven Free Clinic's main population is Hispanics without health insurance and limited English proficiency. The students have basic training in mental health before starting their volunteer service. However, they did not have a space to learn, discuss, and practice mental health approaches from a cultural perspective.

**Objectives:** (1) To develop and incorporate a curriculum tailored to college students with different interests, including mental health topics, and considering cultural factors. (2) To evaluate and improve the curriculum based on evaluations from the students. (3) To improve the mental health services provided at Haven Free Clinic.

**Methods:** A 16-topics curriculum was developed, including general, cultural, and Hispanic mental health topics. Students completed pre and post-evaluation forms. Evaluation forms evaluated comfort in interacting with patients with anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, level of knowledge, and free space for open feedback.

**Results:** Data obtained from pre and post-evaluations completed by the students who participated in these didactic sessions in the academic years 2019 and 2020 has been quantitative and qualitatively analyzed. Data analysis shows significant improvement in the level of comfort in interacting with patients with mental illness. In free-type feedback, students mentioned a preference for classes with role-playing and simulations rather than lecture-type didactics.

**Discussion:** Tailoring a curriculum for college students to their needs and practical applications is crucial in their education. Early incorporation of cultural topics into mental health education is essential when teaching students treating diverse populations.

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## Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Formulate effective ways of teaching culturally sensitive mental health topics to students in different settings.

2. Recognize two teaching methods that have a more significant impact in educating undergraduate students.

#### References

1. Freedy, J. R., Carek, P. J., Dickerson, L. M., & Mallin, R. M. (2013). On Track for Success: An Innovative Behavioral Science Curriculum Model. *The International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine*, 45(4), 299-310. <https://doi.org/10.2190/PM.45.4.aa>

2. Mack, K. Innovations in the Teaching of Behavioral Sciences in the Preclinical Curriculum. *Acad Psychiatry* 29, 471-473 (2005). <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ap.29.5.471>