

A Call for Carceral-Based Medical Education

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Purpose:

Of the medical schools that offer education on carceral-based health, curricula vary widely and not all include training in correctional facilities.¹ The purpose of this initiative is to implement a curriculum that educates medical students at UMMS on the nuances of providing healthcare to justice involved individuals and to expose students to healthcare in correctional facilities.

Approach/Methods:

Needs assessment surveys were sent to students at UMMS to assess exposure to this patient population in the clinical setting, perceived preparedness to care for justice involved patients, and preferences for curricular reform. As a result, two impending initiatives have emerged: an interdisciplinary panel to be offered to medical students just prior to entering their clinical clerkships and a 4-week elective where students rotate through various correctional facilities within the state of Michigan.

Results/Outcomes:

98% of preclinical students that responded feel ill-prepared to provide care to justice involved individuals. 97% of clinical students that responded felt ill-prepared to provide care, with 0% reporting preparedness based on UMMS curriculum. 90% of clinical students report encountering justice involved individuals on rotations. 97.6% of all respondents reported a need for carceral medicine in the curriculum.

Discussion:

The interdisciplinary panel will include 1. justice involved individuals 2. physicians that work with this population 3. law faculty to speak on mass incarceration and health inequities 4. the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) to answer questions pertaining to correctional centers. The elective will include modules focused on life inside corrections, ethics and social considerations, and receiving physical and mental healthcare in correctional facilities along with rotations through MDOC.

Significance:

It is evident that medical students at UMMS desire a curriculum that teaches them about carceral health. Given the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted several health inequities, it is important for students to view incarceration as a health disparity.²

References:

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