Amy Adik
Comparing the Mental Health of Medical School Population to a General Student Population

NORTHEAST OHIO MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

• A growing body of literature demonstrates that significant burnout occurs in as many as 50% of US medical students and is associated with an increased risk of anxiety and depression. These concerns have been heightened by the additional stress placed on society by the COVID-19 pandemic.
• There is limited data, however, about how students in medical school compare to the general student population in universities.
• Over 400 universities and colleges across the United State have participated in the Healthy Minds Study.

OBJECTIVE

• Our study compares the students in a particular mid-west medical school with the average student scores from all the colleges and universities participating in the Healthy Minds Study.

METHODS

• The Healthy Minds Network’s annual web-based survey study examining mental health, service utilization, and related issues among undergraduate and graduate students.
• Since its national launch in 2007, HMS has been fielded at about 400 colleges and universities, with over 550,000 survey respondents.
• The results of the Healthy Minds Study at the Northeast Ohio Medical University (NEOMED) were compared to the average student scores from all the colleges and universities.
• Categories included emotional distress, previous diagnoses of mental illness, stress regarding financial status, mental health/social support, psychiatric medications, and barriers to care.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>% NEOMED (SD)</th>
<th>% All Universities (SD)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you were experiencing serious emotional or mental difficulty, how long was it?</td>
<td>Professional advice</td>
<td>22 ± 1.2</td>
<td>23 ± 1.2</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past 12 months, how many times have you felt that your academic or personal work was negatively affected due to emotional or physical health that you would like to have treated? (dealt with this issue?)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>20 ± 1.3</td>
<td>21 ± 1.3</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past 5 weeks, how many times have you felt that your emotional or mental difficulties have hurt your academics?</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>6 ± 1</td>
<td>9 ± 1</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Diagnosis of Mental Disorder</td>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>17 ± 1</td>
<td>18 ± 1</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>33 ± 1</td>
<td>34 ± 1</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were no statistical differences in the response of NEOMED medical students and general university students when it came to:
• Needing help for emotional or mental health problems
• Taking psychostimulants, anti-depressants, anti-psychotics, mood stabilizers, or sleep medications
• The stress from their financial situation
The NEOMED medical students were significantly more likely to:
• Have no days in the last month when emotional or mental difficulties hurt their academic performance (p=.005)
• Deny the need for help with emotional or mental health problems (p=.047)
• State that they had no need for services (p=.00002) or preferred to deal with issues without professional help (p=.002)

The NEOMED medical students were significantly less likely to:
• Have a previous diagnosis of depression (p=.044) or anxiety (p=.028)
• Be willing to talk with a professional clinician (p=.017), friend (p=.001), significant other (p=.009), or family member (p=.001) about serious emotional distress
• Be taking anti-anxiety medications (p=.018)

CONCLUSIONS

• Students at NEOMED seemed to be functioning at or above the level of a general student population with fewer days of emotional distress causing impairment and no difference in the need for mental health services currently or in the past 12 months.
• They were less likely to be on anti-anxiety medications and no more likely to be on any other category of psychotropic medications.
• Despite the costs of medical education, NEOMED students did not seem more stressed about finances than the general student population.
• The hesitation of NEOMED medical students’ to talk to professional clinicians, friends, family members, or significant others about serious emotional distress seemed related to resilience rather than barriers to receiving care.
• Potential next steps could be to compare the Healthy Minds Study results of NEOMED medical students with other medical schools.

REFERENCES