

TAKING THE HEAT: TEACHING PEDIATRIC RESIDENTS TO COMMUNICATE WITH EMOTIONALLY CHARGED FAMILIES (Research Abstract)

Nicolas J. Delacruz MD Candidate, Suzanne M. Reed MD, John D. Mahan MD, Ansley Splinter MD, Amy Brown MD, Stacy Flowers PsyD, Nicole Verbeck MPH, Nationwide Children's Hospital/Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

Background: Effective communication skills are essential for physicians to deliver high quality, patient-centered care. Effective communication has been shown to positively impact healthcare outcomes, including patient safety, compliance, and satisfaction. Communication with angry families can be challenging, and resident physicians often do not receive specific training on this skill. There is little literature examining this communication skill in pediatric trainees and if performance can be improved with an education intervention. **Objective:** Our objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of an educational workshop based on the Take the HEAT communication strategy. We also aimed to create and validate a novel tool to evaluate resident's skills in communicating with angry families. **Methods:** 34 first-year pediatric and internalmedicine-pediatrics residents participated in our study. The workshop used the Take the HEAT (Hear, Empathize, Apologize, Take action) strategy of communication. Communication skills were assessed through standardized patient encounters at two time points, baseline and post-workshop. Encounters were scored using a locally created and validated assessment tool. **Results:** After Take the HEAT training, residents overall communication performance significantly improved from baseline total mean score 23.15(SD 2.293, range 19-27) to total mean score 25.36(SD 2.655, range 21-31, p-value <0.001). In 2/4 components, residents showed significant improvement after the intervention, while in Apology there was a significant decline in performance, baseline 2.67(SD 1.137) to post-intervention 1.70(SD 1.159). Residents scored lowest on Empathy skills. Intraclass Correlation Coefficient 2.1 demonstrated substantial agreement (0.60 and 0.61) among raters using our novel tool. **Conclusion:** Performance of first- year pediatric trainees in communication with emotionally charged families improved with education focused on the Take the HEAT strategy, demonstrating this as a teachable skill. The poor performance by first year residents in demonstrating empathy should be more thoroughly explored.