Domestic Violence, Dentistry and Theatre for Change: Experiential Approaches to Teaching Dental Students to Identify and Intervene in Domestic Violence

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Community Partners

Haven House
Since 1979, Haven House has provided a broad range of residential and non-residential services to victims of domestic violence.

Theatre for Change
An award winning troupe of professional actors, writers and directors who have used the power of theatre to address current social issues since 1989.

Josephine Goodyear Foundation
Since 1912 has funded non profits in western New York which help “indigent women and children, particularly with their physical needs”
Context of program

- Students receive minimal experiential training in communication skills and patient interaction.
- These skills are usually taught by behavioral scientists in lecture courses, but there is little opportunity in the curriculum to practice and receive feedback on these skills from faculty trained in these areas.
- Clinical faculty by necessity, focus on clinical or technical skills.
- Using only theoretical approaches to teach this content minimizes the importance of skilled patient communication.
Scope of the Problem


- An estimated 2 to 4 million American women are physically abused each year (JADA Vol 137)

- Domestic violence is the major cause of injury to women, resulting in more injuries than auto accidents, muggings and rapes combined (American Institute on Domestic Violence)

- In the U.S. more than 3 women are murdered each day by an intimate partner (Bureau of Justice, 2003)
Why train Dental Students in DV?

- 94% of victims of domestic violence have head, neck and facial injuries (Ochs et al. 1996)

- More than 2 out of 3 people in the US see their dentist at least once each year (Centers for Disease Control, 2002)

- The ADA has issued a policy statement recommending that dentists screen for, document and make appropriate referrals in cases of domestic violence (ADA, 1996)

- Less than 10% of surveyed dentists reported having received any training on domestic violence (Chiodo, et al. 1994)
Methods

Didactic training
- Background, statistics and information on DV
- AVDR approach

Experiential component
- 2nd year dental students role play with professional actors
- Facilitated by social workers from Haven House

Pre- test and Post tests
- Knowledge gained- Domestic Violence Assessment Instrument
- Empathy - Jefferson Scale
Results

Domestic Violence Assessment Instrument

Pre Test Mean

Post Test Mean
Results by Sex

Domestic Violence Assessment Instrument

Male Pre Test Mean
Male Post Test Mean
Female Pre Test Mean
Female Post Test Mean
Preliminary Conclusions

- This is an effective method for increasing dental students’ knowledge and skill regarding domestic violence
- Dental students connected with the material on an affective level
- Student feedback was very positive and indicated a desire for additional learning opportunities of this type
Implications

• Training dental students in communication skills has traditionally not been taught as a clinical skill by behavioral science personnel

• Experiential aspect of training allow students to emotionally connect with the material

• DV training should be standard in dental education

• Training in this and other psychosocial issues germane to dental practice should not be theoretical in nature
Student Feedback

“I thought that this was going to be a lot of B.S., but I really learned something!”