

A Clinically-Focused Discussion of Spirituality and Medicine During the Core Clerkships: Student Knowledge Gains and Feedback

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Purpose and Background

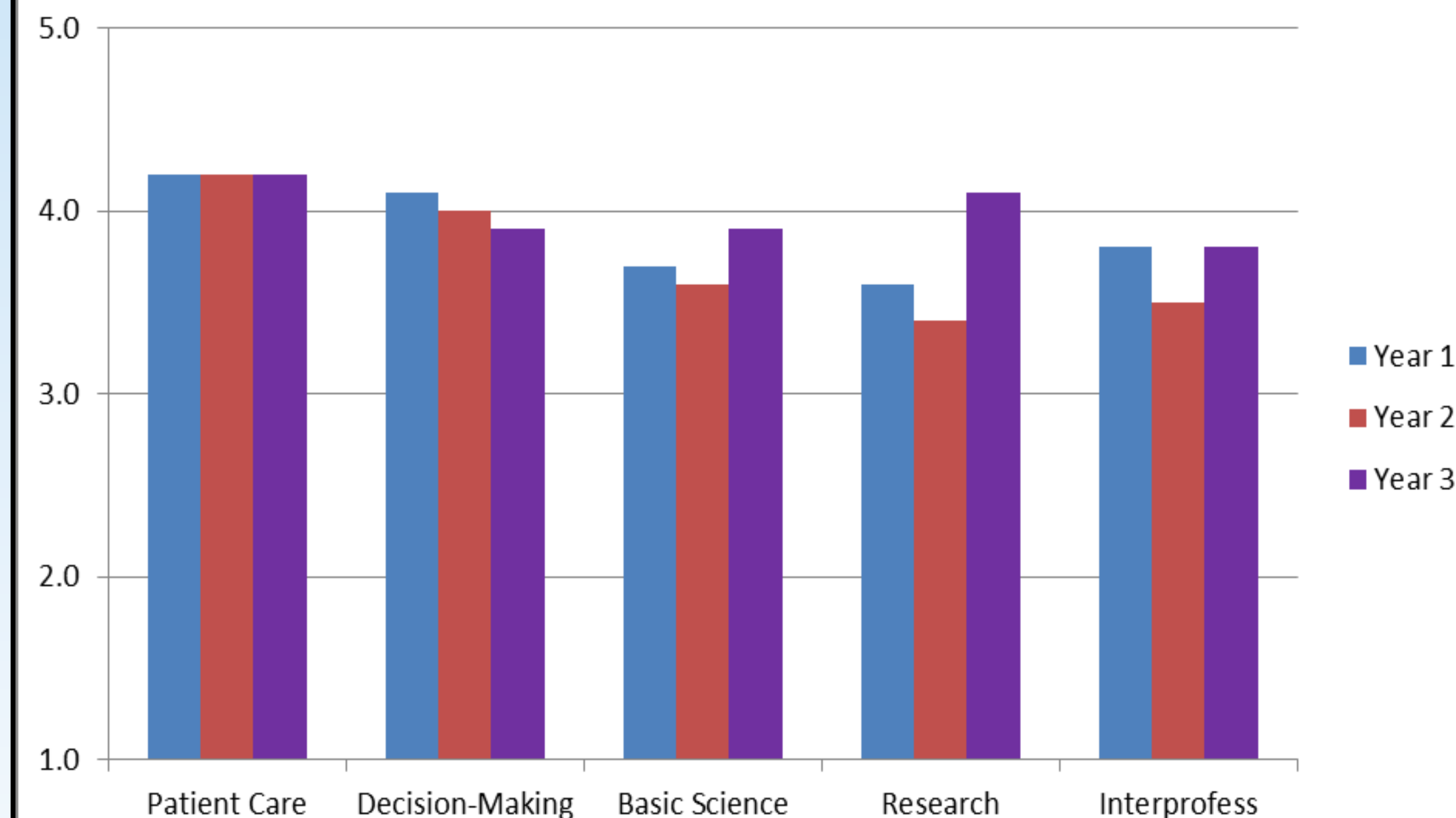
- We developed a M3 seminar series in the clerkship year (Domain Days, or DD) where each department presents topics relevant to their field that are not well covered during the clerkship curriculum.
- Students learn about topics emphasizing basic science, research and interprofessionalism by thoroughly reviewing learning materials and carefully constructed clinical cases.
- A new session (Psychiatry DD) focused on approaches used by physicians to address patients' spiritual concerns, including involvement of religious/spiritual experts in clinical care.
- Purpose of this study: to examine student feedback and knowledge gain resulting from a DD focused on concepts of spirituality and medicine^{1,2}.

Methods

- 92 students over 3 academic years participated in the DD session (73% of all eligible students).
- Students read an assigned article in advance, then received an overview lecture and participated in small group discussion of clinical scenarios dealing with topics related to the objectives previously noted.
- Students completed feedback surveys including specific comments and suggestions for improvement.
- To test knowledge acquisition, a low-stakes 10-item exam was administered at the end of the session.
- We reviewed student feedback and also analyzed student performance on the exam (means, standard deviations, reliability).

Results

Spirituality and Medicine Domain Day



"Engaging presentation on a topic that is difficult to address and discuss!! Enjoyed the scientific approach to a common patient characteristic".

"I would have enjoyed hearing more about how to handle negative aspects of religion-related encounters with patients. For instance, how do you address a patient who speaks very negatively regarding Muslims? How do you respond?"

Student Exam Performance

Exam Item(s)	Years 1 & 2 Percent Correct	Year 3 Percent Correct
Definition of Spirituality	100	83
Neurochemical Signaling	100	83
Impact on IL-6 Levels/Suicide	98	100
Barriers to Discussion w Patients	100	34
LOT Acronym	97	100
Patient Prayer Scenarios	100	90
Exam Mean Score (Reliability)	98.7 (.504)	81.0 (.344)

Discussion

- Students felt the session to be valuable, in that it recognized an important clinical care issue often seen in the patient population for which they provide care.
- Our exam measured student knowledge gain appropriately for feedback purposes.
- Further work is needed to enhance interprofessional aspects of the experience.

Conclusions and Significance

- M3 clerkship students felt the DD session enhanced their ability to provide holistic patient care.
- Reflecting on these issues may facilitate students' abilities to work with a variety of patients who are different from themselves, and who desire their physicians to address spiritual aspects of their care.

References

- Puchalski CM. Spirituality and Medicine: Curricula in Medical Education. *Journal of Cancer Education* 2006; 21 (1): 14-18.
- Ehman JW; Ott BB; Short TH; et al. Do Patients Want Their Physicians to Inquire About Their Spiritual or Religious Beliefs If They Become Gravely Ill? *Archives of Internal Medicine* 1999; 159: 1803-1806.