

# Enhancing Medical Education on Substance Use Disorders: Outcomes from Workshops in Addiction Medicine

Lindsey Simoncini, MPH<sup>1</sup>, Alexandra Murphy, MS<sup>1</sup>, Eric Smith Vilsmark, BS<sup>1</sup>, Paulina Naser-Saravia, BS<sup>1</sup>, Terry Muldoon, BA<sup>1</sup>, Anna Makridis, BS<sup>1</sup>, Amanda Christiano, BS<sup>1</sup>, Lisa Conti, PhD<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine, North Haven, CT

## INTRODUCTION

- Substance Use Disorders (SUDs) represent a significant public health challenge and disproportionately affect marginalized communities<sup>1</sup>
- Medical curricula often lack comprehensive training on addiction medicine<sup>2</sup>, leading to persistent stigma and inadequate care
- We aimed to address these gaps by organizing an interactive symposium to improve knowledge and attitudes toward patients with SUDs

## OBJECTIVES

- Assess knowledge and attitudes towards SUDs
- Expand understanding of non-moralism and treatment optimism
- Increase knowledge of SUD treatment and the role of the interprofessional team
- Increase interest in addiction medicine

## METHODS

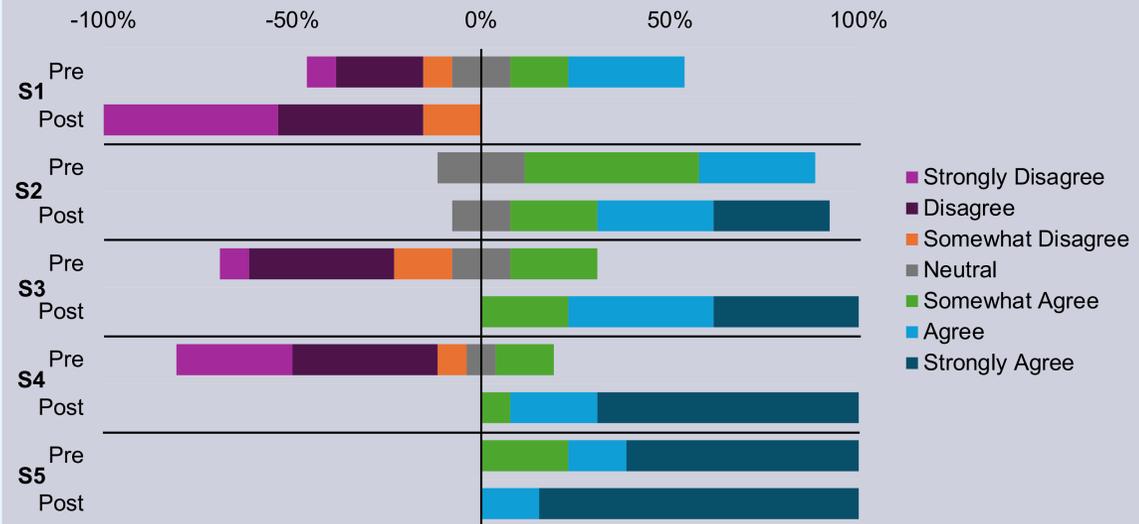
- **Workshop:** The Workshops in Addiction Medicine (WAM) symposium was held on January 17, 2024, at the Frank H. Netter School of Medicine in North Haven, CT.



- **Survey design:** Surveys based on the Brief Substance Abuse Attitude Survey (BSAAS)<sup>3</sup>, were administered pre- and post-symposium. The BSAAS uses a Likert-type response format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).
- **Data analysis:** Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were conducted to compare paired pre- and post-symposium responses for each survey item.

## RESULTS

**Figure 1: Pre- and Post-Symposium Survey Responses (n=13)**



|   | Pre-Symposium (n=13) | Post-Symposium (n=13) | p-value |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| <b>S1.</b> Lifelong abstinence is a necessary goal in the treatment of SUDs.  | 4                    | 1.7                   | <0.001  |
| <b>S2.</b> Group therapy is very important in the treatment of alcoholism or SUD.   | 5.1                  | 5.8                   | 0.006   |
| <b>S3.</b> I am comfortable identifying an opioid overdose.   | 3.1                  | 6.2                   | <0.001  |
| <b>S4.</b> I am comfortable and competent using naloxone.   | 2.4                  | 6.6                   | <0.001  |
| <b>S5.</b> How willing are you to treat patients with Substance Use Disorders (SUDs)?<br>[Not at all willing, Very willing] | 6.4                  | 6.8                   | 0.027   |

- Thirty-five participants completed the pre-symposium survey. Most participants were first-year medical students at the Frank H. Netter School of Medicine.
- **At baseline** participants of the symposium generally had positive attitudes towards patients with SUDs but reported lack of competence in identifying overdoses and administering Narcan
- Thirteen participants completed both the pre- and post-symposium surveys
- **There were significant increases in knowledge of SUDs and confidence identifying overdoses and administering Narcan (Figure 1)**

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- The WAM symposium successfully enhanced participants' knowledge of SUDs. Participants also gained practical skills which have the potential to positively impact the local community.
- One limitation of the current study is the low response rate (37%) to both the pre- and post-symposium surveys.
- This initiative underscores the importance of integrating comprehensive addiction medicine education into medical training programs to dismantle stigma and improve patient outcomes.
- Findings from this study informed a class-wide Narcan training for the Frank H. Netter School of Medicine for the class of 2028 during M1 orientation.

## REFERENCES

- Volkow, N. D., & Blanco, C. (2023). Substance use disorders: a comprehensive update of classification, epidemiology, neurobiology, clinical aspects, treatment and prevention. *World psychiatry* : official journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), 22(2), 203–229. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.21073>
- Ram, A., & Chisolm, M. S. (2016). The Time is Now: Improving Substance Abuse Training in Medical Schools. *Academic psychiatry* : the journal of the American Association of Directors of Psychiatric Residency Training and the Association for Academic Psychiatry, 40(3), 454–460. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40596-015-0314-0>
- Veach, T. L., & Chappel, J. N. (1990). Physician attitudes in chemical dependency: The effects of personal experience and recovery. *Substance Abuse*, 11(2), 97-101.

**Funding:** This research was funded by the PEARLS grant of Quinnipiac University.  
**Institutional Review Board:** Ethical review and approval were waived for this study due to the use of anonymized information that could not be tracked back to study participants.  
**Acknowledgments:** We would like to thank the WAM speakers and the collaborating QU student organizations: Addiction Medicine Interest Group, Family Medicine Interest Group, Emergency Medicine Interest Group, Psychiatry Interest Group, and QU Law Health Law Society.  
**Contact Information:** Lindsey Simoncini, MPH, Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine, [Lindsey.Simoncini@quinnipiac.edu](mailto:Lindsey.Simoncini@quinnipiac.edu)