Several state and federal laws have been proposed or passed that increase the pharmacist's role in hormonal contraceptive access.1 While there are specific guidelines for the pharmacist to follow, prescribing is an entirely new area for most pharmacists. Literature shows that pharmacy students are open to the idea of prescribing, however training programs on this subject are uncommon. Simulation activities can address gaps in clinical learning and creates a controlled environment that allows for practicing specific scenarios such as contraceptive prescribing. Standardized patients (SP) portray patients in a realistic fashion that can target student communication and intervention skills.

METHODS

Included students: Pharmacy students enrolled in a women's health elective in 2017 and 2018 (data from two years)

Pre-survey was electronically administered prior to topic introduction. Students coded their surveys in order to match pre and post surveys.

In class lecture which introduced:
1. Current legislation related to pharmacist prescribing of hormonal contraceptives
2. The protocols in place in various states allowing pharmacist prescribing of contraception
3. Brief review of contraceptive therapeutics
4. Students completed patient cases in class to practice utilizing one of the available prescribing algorithms
5. Students attended the clinical skills center (CSC) activity:
   a. Interviewed an SP
   b. Utilized a prescribing algorithm
   c. Recommended a contraceptive option
   d. Post-survey was electronically administered
6. Pre- and post- survey results were analyzed and compared

OBJECTIVE

Assess the utility of a simulated contraceptive prescribing activity for pharmacy students on student confidence and opinions

BACKGROUND

1. Several state and federal laws have been proposed or passed that increase the pharmacist's role in hormonal contraceptive access.1
2. While there are specific guidelines for the pharmacist to follow, prescribing is an entirely new area for most pharmacists.
3. Literature shows that pharmacy students are open to the idea of prescribing, however training programs on this subject are uncommon.
4. Simulation activities can address gaps in clinical learning and creates a controlled environment that allows for practicing specific scenarios such as contraceptive prescribing.
5. Standardized patients (SP) portray patients in a realistic fashion that can target student communication and intervention skills.

RESULTS

This activity was a realistic way for students to practice evaluation of patients for hormonal contraceptive use. The intervention did not significantly change the opinions related to contraceptive prescribing of this student population. Student comfort in their ability to prescribe contraceptives increased significantly after completing the activity, which suggests that the active learning technique of standardized patients should be utilized as a way to prepare pharmacists for expanded practice roles such as prescribing.

DISCUSSION

- Student opinions of the simulation activity:
  1. The majority of students agreed/strongly agreed that the simulation was realistic and challenging.
  2. The majority of students agreed/strongly agreed that the protocol/algorithem was easy to follow. Not all states use or require an algorithm, however this may indicate a strength in using an algorithm.
  3. The majority of pharmacy students agreed/strongly agreed that the activity was valuable to their future practice and made them more confident in their ability to prescribe contraceptives.
  4. Student opinions about hormonal contraceptive prescribing:
    1. The pre survey means related to opinions of contraceptive prescribing were high, and the intervention did not significantly change these opinions.
    2. The only significant change occurred in response to "I am comfortable evaluating a patient and recommending a specific hormonal contraceptive product per protocol" (3.72 vs. 4.32, p<0.19).

- Study Limitations:
  1. Small sample size
  2. Completed at one school of pharmacy
  3. Matched results not available for all study participants

CONCLUSION

This activity was a realistic way for students to practice evaluation of patients for hormonal contraceptive use. The intervention did not significantly change the opinions related to contraceptive prescribing of this student population. Student comfort in their ability to prescribe contraceptives increased significantly after completing the activity, which suggests that the active learning technique of standardized patients should be utilized as a way to prepare pharmacists for expanded practice roles such as prescribing.

REFERENCES


The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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