



Medical Student Perspectives on the Reporting of Mistreatment by Patients

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

- Mistreatment of medical students by faculty, residents, and hospital staff often goes unreported, as students commonly feel these incidents are not important enough to report^{1,2}. This may be a result of the longstanding culture of resilience and deference in medicine and acceptance of mistreatment as part of medical training^{1,2,3,4,5,6}.
- The extent to which students are mistreated by patients is even lesser known, as this data is not currently collected in the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Graduation Questionnaire (GQ) and Year Two (Y2) surveys³.
- It has been shown that mistreatment by patients has a negative effect on medical students' wellbeing and experience⁷.
- The purpose of this study is to examine medical students' experiences with and attitudes regarding the reporting of mistreatment by patients.
- We aim to understand the frequency of reporting of such incidents, the reasons for not reporting, and the level of satisfaction with the outcome of having reported the incident.

METHODS

- A 2020 Qualtrics survey on student mistreatment by patients was administered via email to all medical students currently enrolled at Wayne State University School of Medicine (WSUSOM), with a completion rate of 50.7% (n=582) of the eligible population.
- The survey was anonymous, voluntary, and included questions that were adapted from the mistreatment sections of the AAMC GQ and Y2 questionnaires, which currently exclude patients as potential perpetrators.
- Questions were centered around the mistreatment of medical students by patients, excluding behaviors attributed to neuropsychiatric conditions, in order to assess potential differences in mistreatment of medical students by patients versus nonpatients.
- In addition, the survey inquired about students' habits and attitudes regarding the reporting of these incidents and their satisfaction with the outcome if reported.

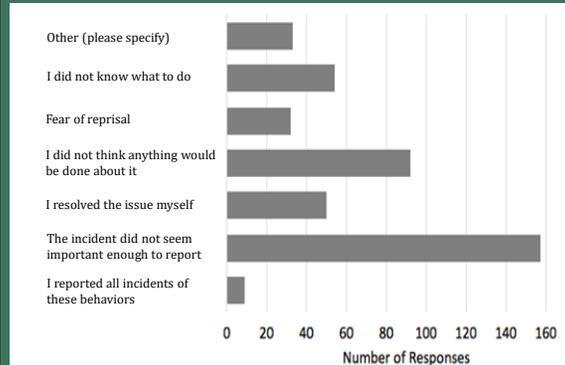
RESULTS

94.8% of medical students who experienced an incident of mistreatment by patients did not report it.

The most common reasons for not reporting included:

- Not feeling the incident was important enough
- Not thinking anything would be done about it
- Not knowing what to do

Reasons for not reporting an incident of mistreatment by patients



Patients vs. Non-patients

- 53.2% of respondents said they felt they had appropriate resources and support to handle and/or seek help for mistreatment perpetrated by **patients** whereas 70.6% of respondents felt they had appropriate tools to handle and/or seek help for mistreatment perpetrated by **non-patients**.

Awareness vs. Readiness

- 86.5% of respondents were aware of WSUSOM policies regarding the mistreatment of medical students, but only 61.7% said they felt comfortable with their knowledge of these policies.

Level of Satisfaction with Reporting

- Among respondents who said they reported the mistreatment behavior, less than 60% of them were satisfied with the outcome of having reported the incident.

DISCUSSION

- The low frequency of reporting and the perception that incidents of mistreatment are not important enough to report support the idea that mistreatment is an accepted part of medical training.
- The disconnect between students' awareness of mistreatment reporting policies and their understanding of how to apply them indicates that more comprehensive training on these policies may be necessary to increase reporting frequency.
- There is also a discrepancy in students' perception of having the appropriate tools to handle mistreatment by patients in comparison to mistreatment by other individuals involved in their medical education.
- The level of satisfaction with the outcome of reporting shows that there is room to improve the student experience in response to their reporting of these incidents. However due to the low number of students answering this question we need more data before drawing further conclusions.
- This data provides a baseline to assess the efficacy of potential changes to the reporting process in the future.

CONCLUSIONS

- The underreporting of these patient mistreatment experiences creates a knowledge gap around this issue, which may contribute to the prevalent attitude that these incidents are not important enough to report.
- Policy and curricular changes should aim to shift the widespread perception that patient harassment is to be accepted. These changes could include expanding policy awareness and supporting students in reporting incidents of mistreatment by patients.
- This project contributes to ongoing work to identify opportunities to improve our understanding of the magnitude of medical student mistreatment by patients. This work intends to increase student satisfaction with the outcome of reporting of these incidents and improve medical students' experiences in clinical settings.

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