

# First Aid First: Examining the Need for Required First Aid Training in the Medical School Curriculum



WAYNE STATE  
School of Medicine

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## INTRODUCTION

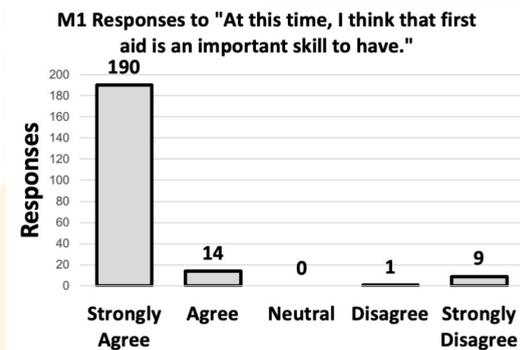
- Wayne State University School of Medicine (WSUSOM) prides itself in community service through student-led initiatives in Detroit.
- At WSUSOM, first- and second-year students spend 21,000 hours doing community service every year.
- With such close ties to the community, it is reasonable for the community to expect medical students to assist when emergencies arise.
- In teaching first aid skills, past research has shown the importance of both didactic and practical learning components to improve retention of knowledge (1,2).
- In this project, we assess the incoming classes' experience with first aid training and certification prior to medical school and examine the need for implementing mandatory training as part of WSUSOM's first-year curriculum.

## METHODS

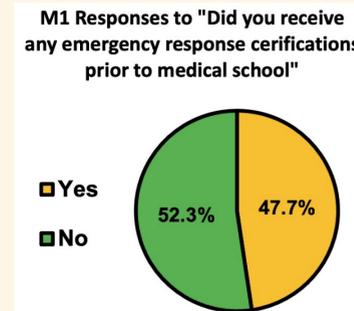
- First-year students (Class of 2025) at WSUSOM participated in mandatory first aid training during their second week of medical school.
- Each student was required to view a 3-hour video lecture which covered relevant first aid material on their own time.
- Students then attended an hour long, in-person training session hosted by First Aid First (FAF) to practice skills such as CPR, proper AED use, and choking response.
  - Notably, the training did not award official certification in any of these skills.
- FAF developed an assessment survey for the students to take immediately after their assigned 1-hour training session.
  - Survey questions included situation-based questions to assess concepts discussed in the training, level of confidence in administering first aid or performing relevant skills, student perception of the training's usefulness, and any prior first aid experience or emergency response certifications.
- The REDCap database was used to store and organize data
- Microsoft Excel was used to create relevant figures visualizing student responses and for performing basic statistical calculations.

## RESULTS

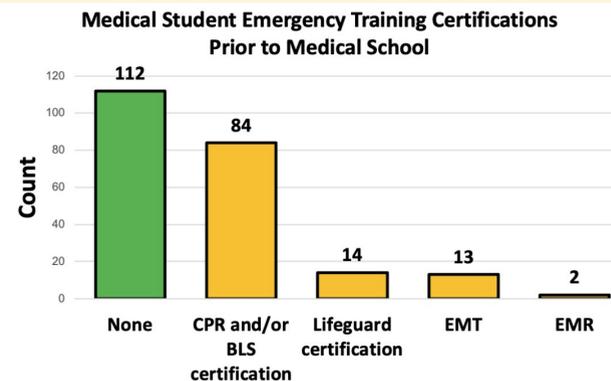
- 214 surveys were completed following the training sessions.
- 52.3% of the first-year medical students who completed the survey reported that they had never received emergency response certification prior to starting medical school.
- Prior to medical school, 39.3% of all first-year students obtained CPR and/or Basic Life Support (BLS) certification, 6.5% obtained lifeguard certification, 6.1% obtained Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification, and 0.9% obtained Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) certification.
- Of the 165 students who responded to the optional survey question "Would you recommend this training to others?," 100% stated that they would recommend the training.
- 88.8% of students strongly agreed that first aid is an important skill to have at that time.



**Figure 1.** Student agreement with the statement "At this time, I think that first aid is an important skill to have." An overwhelming majority (88.8%) of M1 students "strongly agree" that first aid is an important skill to have at the time despite just having begun their medical training. An additional 6.5% said they "agree." Only 4.7% of students indicated that they disagreed with the statement.



**Figure 2.** Assessing the percentage of medical students that had obtained any emergency response certifications prior to medical school. Slightly over half (52.3%) of first year medical students indicated they had never received any formal certification in emergency medical response prior to entering medical school.



**Figure 3.** Emergency training certifications obtained by incoming students prior to beginning medical school. While most M1 students had received no formal emergency response certifications, CPR and/or BLS certification was the most reported among those who did. Lifeguard certification, emergency medical technician (EMT) certification, and emergency medical responder (EMR) certifications were also reported to a lesser extent.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Medical students clearly value possessing first aid skills early in their medical education to serve as dependable physicians-in-training in the surrounding community.
- However, many students enter medical school with no previous experience or certification.
- Students in pre-clerkship at WSUSOM currently learn a majority of first aid skills through the required Basic Life Support (BLS) that typically occurs during their first year or from volunteering with organizations like First Aid First. The Class of 2025 was the first M1 class required to participate in the first aid training that was hosted by FAF.
- WSUSOM is a community-based school, and the medical students engage with the community often and collect numerous volunteer hours in their first two years.
- Students volunteer at many locations, including clinics and community health fairs. They are often placed in the community, so there is a societal expectation for students, as physicians-in-training, to be called upon for help in an emergent situation and that they can effectively respond.
- Without a required first aid curriculum in the first year, most first year students will not have the proper training to administer CPR, correctly use an AED, or other essential skills. Thus, they will not be able to appropriately assist in an emergency.
- This project demonstrates the need for first aid training to be a required part of the first-year pre-clerkship curriculum at a community-based school such as WSUSOM.

## REFERENCES

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- Altıntaş KH, Yildiz AN, Aslan D, Ozvarış SB, Bilir N. First aid and basic life support training for first year medical students. *Eur J Emerg Med.* 2009 Dec;16(6):336-8. doi: 10.1097/MEJ.0b013e32832d048b. PMID: 19491692.