



The Impact of Personal Experience with Substance Use Disorders on First-Year Medical Students' Knowledge and Attitudes Towards Opioid Use Disorders

WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Kristina Barrientos, Tabitha Moses MS, Tara Gloystein, Eva Waineo MD, Mark K. Greenwald PhD
Wayne State University School of Medicine, Detroit, MI



INTRODUCTION

- In 2018, there were 46,802 opioid-associated overdose deaths in the US¹.
- While over 20 million Americans suffer from substance use disorders (SUDs), only 11% receive treatment³.
- Training student physicians in SUD education is an essential component of addressing this wide education & treatment gap³.
- Furthermore, lack of SUD training may lead to physician knowledge deficits and negative attitudes towards individuals with SUD². SUD tend to be the most stigmatized disorders³.
- Recent studies strongly indicate that early SUD education incorporated into the medical school curriculum can reduce negative attitudes and stigmas towards patients with SUDs²⁻³.
- As such, Wayne State University School of Medicine (WSUSOM) has incorporated SUD education into the pre-clerkship curriculum.

OBJECTIVES

- This study examined the impact of personal experience with SUDs on first-year medical students' knowledge and attitudes towards SUDs.
- We predicted that individuals with prior knowledge of a person with a SUD were more likely to have positive attitudes towards individuals with SUD.

METHODS

- 1st-year medical students completed a baseline survey to examine past experiences with naloxone and opioid overdose (OOD), clinical experiences, knowledge and attitudes about OUD and naloxone, and attitudes towards patients with SUD.
- Students completed the Opioid Overdose Attitude Scale (OOAS), Opioid Overdose Knowledge Scale (OOKS), and Medical Conditions Regard Scale (MCRS).
- Independent t-tests were used to compare results of key outcomes between students who knew someone with a SUD and those who did not.

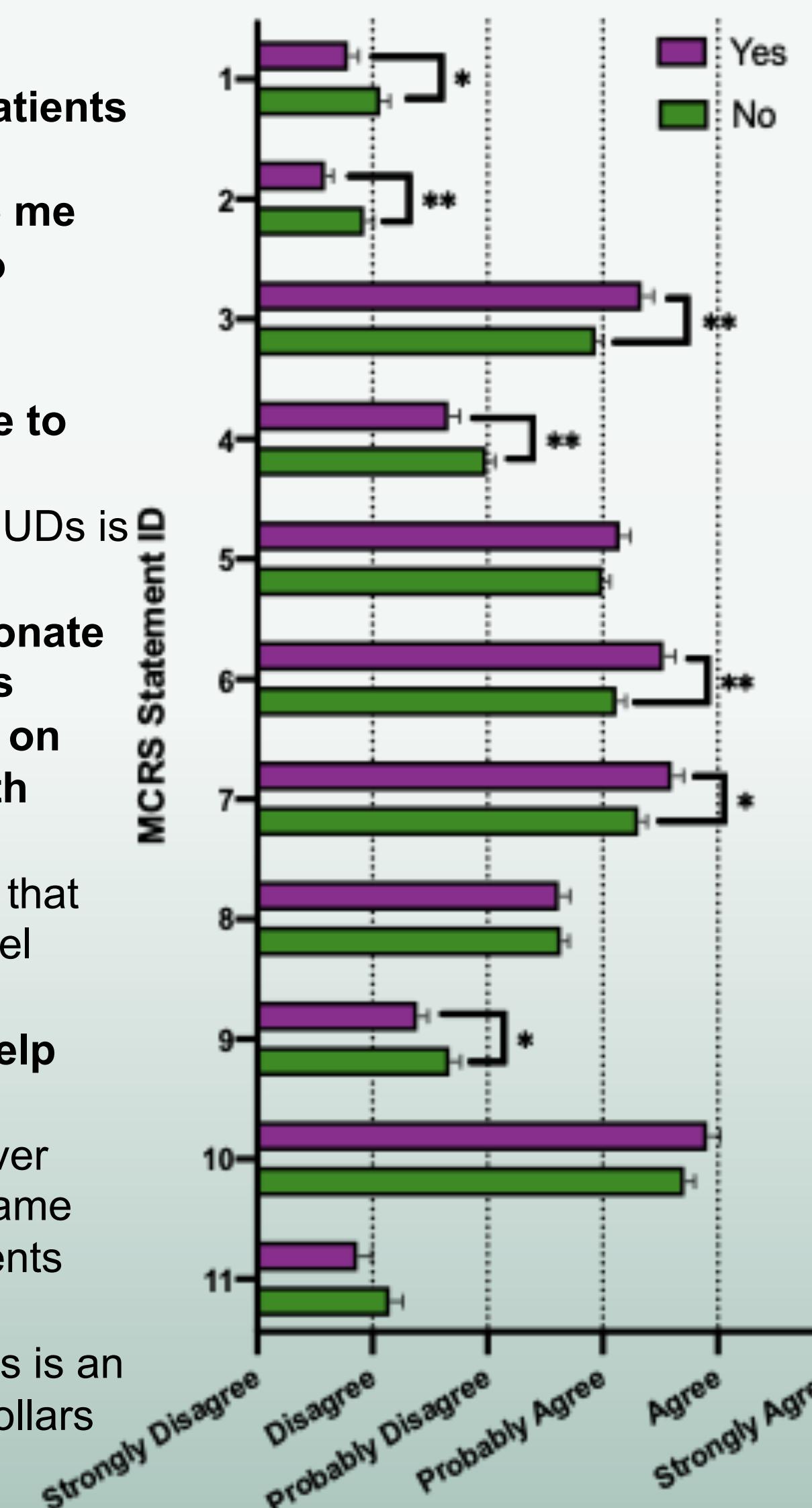
RESULTS

- 250 students from Class of 2024 completed the survey
- Average age: 23.4 ± 2.5 years and 50.0% female
- 46.0% White, 22.8% Asian, 13.2% Middle Eastern, 10.0% Black
- 65.6% had paid healthcare employment prior to medical school
- 92.4% had volunteered in healthcare prior to medical school
- 42.8% (n=107) knew someone with SUD or had one themselves

Figure 1: Comparison of mean (\pm SEM) responses to the 11 statements of the MCRS between students who knew someone with an SUD and students who did not (* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$)

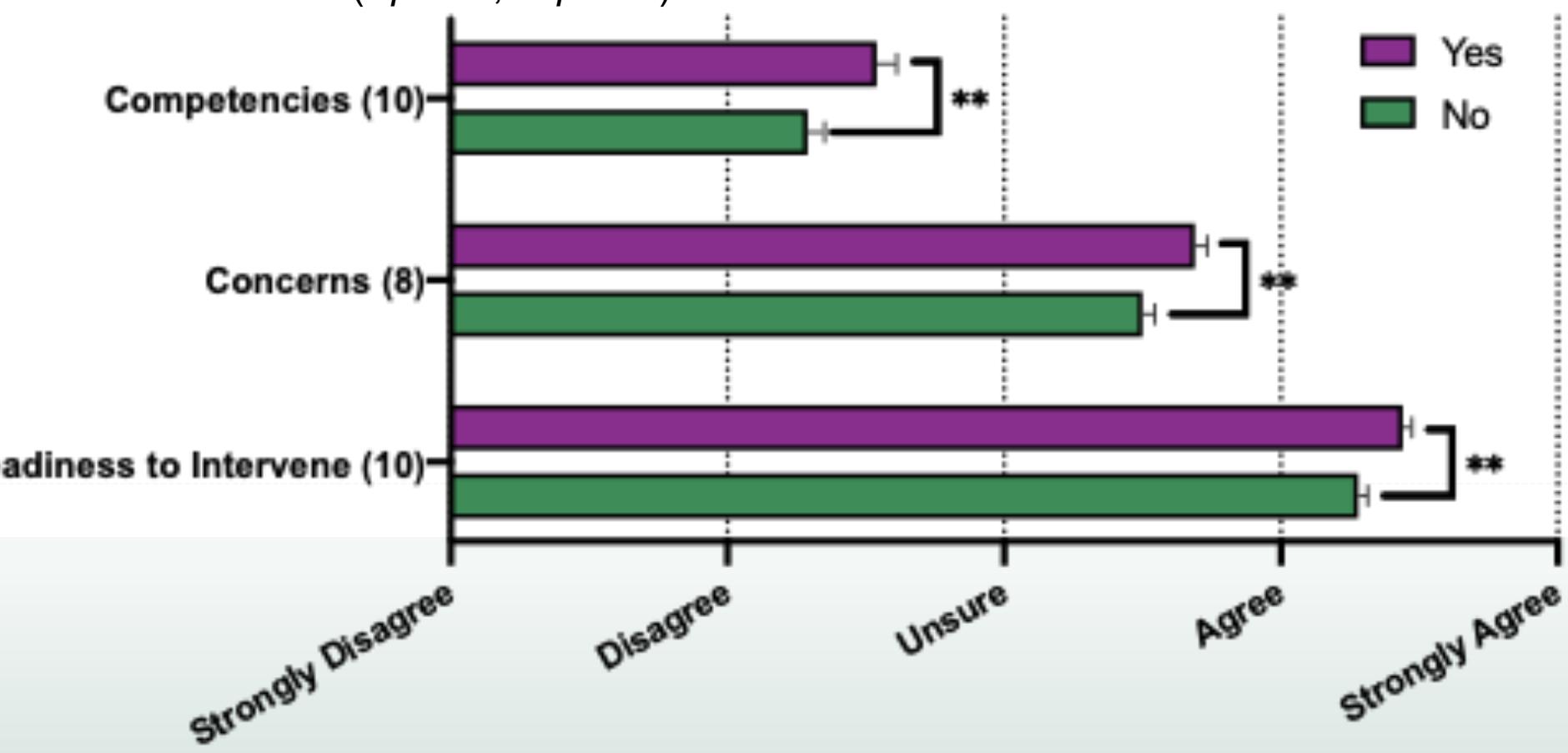
Medical Conditions Regard Scale (modified for SUDs):

- I prefer not to work with patients with SUDs
- Patients with SUDs irritate me
- I enjoy giving extra time to patients with SUDs
- Patients with SUDs are particularly difficult for me to work with
- Working with patients with SUDs is satisfying
- I feel especially compassionate toward patients with SUDs
- I wouldn't mind getting up on call nights for patients with SUDs
- I can usually find something that helps patients with SUDs feel better
- There is little I can do to help patients with SUDs
- Insurance plans should cover patients with SUDs to the same degree that they cover patients with other conditions
- Treating patients with SUDs is an ineffective use of medical dollars



RESULTS

Figure 2: Total number of items (\pm SEM) answered correctly for each domain of the Opioid Overdose Attitudes Scale (OOAS) grouped by students who knew someone with an SUD and students who did not (* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$)



There were no differences in beliefs about whether medical students should receive substance use training or desire to receive naloxone training between students who knew someone with a SUD and students who did not.

CONCLUSION

- Physicians across all specialties will encounter patients with SUDs.
- Interestingly, nearly half of the medical students who participated in the baseline survey reported knowing someone with a SUD or had one themselves.
- We found that these individuals demonstrated more positive attitudes towards individuals with SUDs and reported feeling more competent and ready to respond to OOD.
- These findings highlight the need for SUD curriculum that incorporates early exposure to individuals with SUDs as these experiences can help destigmatize and combat negative attitudes towards SUDs.

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