Nationally, students in their pre-clerkship years have been abruptly transitioned to a mostly or entirely virtual educational experience. In this research study, we explored the impacts of this radical and sudden change on medical student well-being.

How does the COVID-19 pandemic affect this already staggeringly high burn-out rate? To our knowledge, this question has not been thoroughly explored in the literature.

We hypothesized that the sudden changes in medical education—including the loss of many timed and anticipated traditions, such as physical exam sessions, shadowing, and preceptorships—may potentially have negative effects on the mental health of medical students.

OBJECTIVES

Evaluate how students feel about their overall satisfaction in medical school. Assess how students feel about their curriculum and receive feedback on areas for improvement. Assess how students feel about their learning opportunities or experiences Evaluate student burn-out and receive feedback/suggestions on ways to mitigate it.

BACKGROUND

• A 12-question survey was designed using Qualtrics Survey Software
• The survey was distributed to preclinical students at UC Davis via email
• Survey responses were recorded for a total of 12 weeks
• Survey responses were analyzed using Qualtrics Survey Software
• Study design was approved by an internal review board (IRB)

Inclusion criteria:

• Pre-clinical Students at UC Davis School of Medicine were included in this study. This school was chosen because of the authors' institutional affiliation. Other UC schools were not examined due to resource and time limitations.

Exclusion Criteria:

• MS3/4 students

RESULTS

I am still able to explore a variety of different medical fields and specialties. Students mostly (75%) felt supported by their institution. I feel supported by my institution. I feel that I am getting a substandard education because of the new curriculum. I feel still able to learn at least as effectively over Zoom/online as I would in person. I feel burned out or emotionally exhausted from medical school.

MATERIALS & METHODS

A 12-question survey was designed using Qualtrics Survey Software. The survey was distributed to preclinical students at UC Davis via email. Survey responses were recorded for a total of 12 weeks. Survey responses were analyzed using Qualtrics Survey Software. Study design was approved by an internal review board (IRB).

The background of the study is that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected medical education. The objective of this research is to evaluate how students feel about their overall satisfaction in medical school, their curriculum, and receive feedback on areas for improvement. The study was conducted at the UC Davis School of Medicine and included 140 preclinical students. The survey was distributed via email and responses were recorded for 12 weeks. The data was analyzed using Qualtrics Survey Software.

The survey included 12 questions, such as assessing how students feel about different medical fields and specialties, their support from their institution, their ability to learn effectively online, and their overall satisfaction in medical school. The survey also explored how students feel about Zoom/online learning.

The study design was approved by the IRB. Inclusion criteria were pre-clinical students at UC Davis School of Medicine, while exclusion criteria were MS3/4 students.

CONCLUSIONS

• A majority of students (55%) feel they are getting a substandard education overall.
• Areas of greatest deficit were in professional development/career exploration and clinical skills.
• Seventy-one percent of students reported feeling burned out at least half of the time or more with 99% of students also encountering some level of "Zoom Fatigue".
• Students had increased anxiety surrounding future milestones (ceremonies, USMLE Step 1) which could be due to lost clinical opportunities or experiences.
• Students mostly (75%) felt supported by their institution at least half of the time.
• Most students (94%) were able to prioritize mental health at least some of the time.

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