Introduction

With a growing popularity of medicine in media, there is a need to develop innovative approaches to train health care providers how to effectively communicate with an ever-changing patient population.

Efforts have been made to incorporate cinema education into physician assistant (PA) programs and pop culture into public health education.

No studies have evaluated pop culture in PA education.

Purpose

To gauge receptiveness and effectiveness of retention and recall of dense medical material by incorporating an innovative approach using relatable pop culture in PA didactic instruction.

Methods

Setting/Participants: UT Southwestern PA classes of 2016 and 2017 (n=61).

Qualitative Methods: Class of 2016 focus group (n=7)
- The group was presented fourteen questions and their answers were recorded and transcribed.
- Word trends were identified to aid in possible future appeal, usefulness, and dissemination of health related learning content coupled with pop culture triggers.

Quantitative Methods: Email with 8-item online survey link.
- Students rated level of agreement with attitudes and receptiveness concerning the use of pop culture in PA didactic course instruction on 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree)
- Responses were dichotomized (strongly disagree to undecided/neutral; agree to strongly agree) to determine the percent agreement for each survey item.

Qualitative Results

- Majority of students reported exposure to lectures utilizing pop culture references.
- Although students found these references enjoyable and engaging, it did not aid in long term memory.
  - “Only one teacher has used it and I liked it . . . Because it helped me stay awake. I don’t think it helped me remember anything [but, it] was just more enjoyable.”
- All students correlated pop culture and medicine, most notably through health information dissemination (positive and negative depictions).
  - “. . . People always say, “well, Dr. Oz says . . .”
- Most common disease processes students were exposed to via pop culture were breast cancer and Parkinson’s disease.
  - “Breast cancer and Angelina Jolie.”
  - “Robin Roberts had breast cancer and brought awareness.”
  - “Parkinson’s = Michael J. Fox . . .”
  - “Michael J. Fox and Parkinson’s . . .”
- All students welcomed the appropriate use of pop culture in the PA didactic classroom.
  - “It absolutely helps me pay more attention.”
  - “… as long as it’s not too distracting . . .”
- No student could recall a PA portrayal in pop culture.

Quantitative Results

- Majority of respondents agreed with the use of pop culture in PA didactic instruction.
- Attitudes and Receptiveness Outcomes:
  - Appropriate: 72.1%
  - Greater retention: 73.8%
  - Pat utilization: 73.8%
  - Receptiveness: 91.8%
  - Enjoyable: 88.5%
  - Not receptive: 1.6%
  - More engaged: 77%
  - Long-term retention: 80.3%

Conclusions/Next Steps

- Pop culture in the PA classroom offers mental breaks for the students allowing for an increased attention span.
- This is beneficial secondary to dense subject matter presented which may overload the student’s working memory capacity.
- All offered courses will be evaluated for methods to appropriately incorporate pop culture into lecture content.
- Integration of pop culture will begin with the patient evaluation, clinical medicine, and evidence based medicine courses.
- Follow-up evaluations to determine changes in receptiveness will be administered at the end of the academic year.

Contact: Daytheon.Sturges@utsouthwestern.edu