PURPOSE

- Physician burnout has gained increased attention with similar trends seen in Physician Assistants (PA); however little information exists on PA student burnout.  
- Concerned about personal and professional implications of burnout, the University of Colorado PA Program created a new curriculum using four modifiable factors (learning environment, grading/grades, assessment/exams, and faculty support) to decrease student burnout.1,2,4
- The purpose of this study was to determine if a difference exists in the three subconstructs of burnout between cohorts of students in two curricula, and the contributions of the four modifiable factors to their perceived burnout.

METHODS

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University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

RESULTS

Quantitative Results

Descriptive Statistics on Emotional Exhaustion

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
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Descriptive Statistics on Cynicism

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Descriptive Statistics on Professional Efficacy

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Qualitative Findings

Emergent Codes

- Emotional Exhaustion
- Cynicism
- Professional Efficacy

Focus Group Interviews
Randomly Selected, Anonymous

Traditional Curriculum Students (n=5)

Colorado Curriculum Students (n=5)

Traditional Curriculum Students (n=42)

Colorado Curriculum Students (n=44)

T = Traditional Curriculum; C = Colorado Curriculum

Quantitative Evaluation: Results

- Emotional Exhaustion: Higher for the traditional curriculum (p=0.001)
- Cynicism: Higher for the traditional curriculum (p=0.033)
- Professional Efficacy: No significant difference (p=0.35)

DISCUSSION

- The results were surprising to the researchers with the data pointing to additional factors outside the curriculum that may exacerbate or mitigate student burnout beyond modified curricular components.
- The qualitative findings demonstrate that student lived-experiences of burnout differ from the conceptual framework used in this study and existing tools.
- This study proposes that future research needs to:
  - Assess student burnout across a continuum
  - Use mixed methodologies including focus groups
  - Seek greater clarity on the five emergent codes
- Additional studies should examine:
  - External factors affecting students that cause burnout
  - External resources utilized by students to prevent burnout
  - Student attributes that may predispose to burnout
  - The context experienced by students during data collection

CONCLUSION

- There was 100% response rate
- No significant statistical difference in emotional exhaustion (p=0.35), cynicism (p=0.29) and professional efficacy (p=0.23) scores between the two student cohorts (P<.05).
- The exact terms for the three subconstructs of burnout were rarely used by the students when discussing the four modifiable factors within their respective curriculum.
- Five emergent codes were identified: motivation, well-being, time-in-class, demands from specific courses, and unclear expectations.

REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Special thank you to Rachel Byrne MS, PA-C, and Dr. Connie Fulmer for their insight and support on this project.