

# A Comparison of the Learning Environment and Student Wellness in Longitudinal Integrated Clerkships and Traditional Block Rotations

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**Background:** Medical students report elevated prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression. Mental health worsens in medical school, especially during clerkships, suggesting that learning environment may negatively impact wellness. There is limited literature describing wellness and learning environment in Longitudinal Integrated Clerkships (LICs) compared to traditional block rotations (TBRs). This study aimed to determine if there are differences in wellbeing and learning environment between students in LIC and TBR curricula at a single medical school.

**Methods:** Students at the University of Colorado responded to surveys before and after clerkships (82 LIC, 71 TBR). Learning environment was evaluated through specific survey questions. The Dyrbye Medical Student Well-Being Index (MSWBI) was used to assess wellness. Results were compared using paired and independent t-tests, chi-square, and Fisher exact tests.

**Results:** There were significant differences in learning environment after clerkships. LIC students more often felt there were faculty they could confide in ( $p < 0.001$ ) and that faculty/administration gave personal help to students ( $p < 0.01$ ). LIC students also reported less intense competition for grades ( $\chi^2 = 3.97$ ,  $p = 0.046$ ). There was no difference in MSWBI score between LIC and TBR students before or after clerkships. While TBR students' MSWBI score significantly increased pre- to post-clerkship, indicating decreased wellness (0.53,  $p < 0.01$ ), the change for LIC students was not significant (0.37,  $p = 0.07$ ).

**Conclusions:** Students in LICs perceive greater support from faculty and administration, and experience tempering in the intensity of grading competition. Wellness overall is similar between TBR and LIC students, though students in the LIC model may experience less of the negative impacts well-described to occur during clerkships.