

Abstract:

Purpose

Medical students often struggle with confidence when navigating new and unexpected patient scenarios and clinical settings. Theatrical improvisation (improv) empowers participants to create scenes on the spot, fostering adaptability and collaboration. These concepts have been extended to the medical space through improv training programs for medical professionals. We expect that fourth-year medical students will report increased empathy, confidence, and collaboration after taking the Medical Improv class at University of Colorado School of Medicine (CUSOM). Additionally, we expect that past participants of this course will report continued value in each of these areas in their current clinical practice.

Methods

9 fourth-year medical students participated in the Medical Improv elective at CUSOM in the 2025 spring semester. We created post-course surveys assessing students' confidence in clinical encounters, teamwork skills, and ability to empathize with patients. In the second phase of our project, we will contact past participants of the course to evaluate their use of these skills in their current clinical practice. We will analyze quantitative data rating student's comfort with these different areas, and qualitative analysis will be performed on narrative responses from participants.

Results

All the students surveyed demonstrated some level of agreement that they felt more confident to respond in unexpected or unfamiliar clinical situations, were more aware of patients' non-verbal cues, and more able to connect and empathize with patients. 8 of

the 9 students agreed that they were more aware of their own nonverbal cues in clinical settings. Narrative responses indicated that the course was very helpful for confidence-building, and students indicated that they would likely carry these skills into their future clinical practice. We anticipate results for the second phase of our project to be available in Spring of 2026 once the survey for past participants has been distributed.

Conclusion

Our study supports Medical Improv training as a high yield, low-cost initiative to promote student medical students' empathy, confidence, and collaboration in clinical settings.