ABSTRACT

Medical students report elevated prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression. Mental health worsens in medical school, especially during clerkships, affecting academic performance, faculty relationships, and patient care. Changes in curricula (content, scheduling, grading, etc.) associated with improved wellbeing. Numerous US medical schools, including the University of Colorado (CUSOM), have adopted longitudinal integrated clerkships (LICs) LIC students rotate in core specialties concurrently compared to traditional block rotations (TBRs). 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 (χ² = 3.97, p=0.046). There was no difference in MSWBII score between LIC and TBR students. While TBR students’ MSWBII score significantly increased from pre-clerkship, indicating decreased wellness (0.53, p<0.01), the change for LIC students was not significant (0.37, p=0.07). Students in LICs perceive greater support from faculty and administration, and experience tempering in the intensity of grading competition. Wellness is similar between TBR and LIC students, though LIC students may experience less of the negative impacts well-described to occur during clerkships.

INTRODUCTION

• Medical students report elevated prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression.1,2 Mental health worsens in medical school, especially during clerkships, affecting academic performance, faculty relationships, and patient care.3,4 Changes in curricula (content, scheduling, grading, etc.) associated with improved wellbeing.5 Numerous US medical schools, including the University of Colorado (CUSOM), have adopted longitudinal integrated clerkships (LICs).6 LIC students rotate in core specialties concurrently compared to traditional block rotations (TBRs).7,8 LIC students more often felt there were faculty they could confide in (p<0.001).9 LIC students also reported less intense competition for grades (χ² = 3.97, p=0.046). There was no difference in MSWBII score between LIC and TBR students. While TBR students’ MSWBII score significantly increased from pre-clerkship, indicating decreased wellness (0.53, p<0.01), the change for LIC students was not significant (0.37, p=0.07). Students in LICs perceive greater support from faculty and administration, and experience tempering in the intensity of grading competition. Wellness is similar between TBR and LIC students, though LIC students may experience less of the negative impacts well-described to occur during clerkships.

METHODS

• Students at CUSOM administered End of Phase (EOP) surveys EOP2 survey before clerkships, EOP3 survey after completing clerkship rotations Analysis of EOP2 and EOP3 for CUSOM class of 2024 153 students surveyed (71 TBR, 82 LIC) Wellness measured with Dyrbeye Medical Student Well-Being Index (MSWBII), validated tool screening for student distress.7,8 Learning Environment questions related to support, competition for grades, peer familiarity, and student input Compared LIC and TBR groups within EOP2 and EOP3, and changes between EOP2 to EOP3 within curriculum groups Independent and paired t-tests, chi-square, Fisher exact tests

RESULTS

• No difference between groups in peer familiarity, student curricular input, or faculty professionalism
• Increase for LIC from pre- to post-clerkship in feeling there were faculty they could confide in (p<0.01)
• After clerkships, LIC students more often felt there were faculty they confide in than TBR peers (p<0.001)**
• No difference in any MSWBII question, or in total average score, between LIC and TBR before or after clerkships
• LIC students’ MSWBII score significantly increased from before to after clerkships, indicating decreased wellness (0.53, p=0.01)*****

LIMITATIONS

• Subjects from a single US allopathic medical school limit generalizability
• Lack of randomization—students who chose LIC may vary from TBR students in unmeasured ways
• Contemporary events—medical students have higher rates of depression/anxiety during COVID-19 era*

CONCLUSIONS

• The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose
• This project has received no funding, and has been approved as Exempt by the Colorado Multiple Institution Review Board (COMIRB)
• We would like to thank the University of Colorado Office of Evaluation, Execution, and Outcome for their hard work and data contribution towards this project

STATEMENTS

REFERENCES