



# Medical Student Perceptions of LGBTQIA Inclusivity in Anesthesiology

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## Overview

- LGBTQIA-identifying medical students' perception of inclusivity within a specialty is highly predictive of their specialty choice (1).
- An LGBTQIA-inclusive culture has a positive impact on student learning and patient care (2).
- However, limited data is available on the perceptions of inclusivity in the specialty of anesthesiology.
- To evaluate this, we designed a pilot study to survey fourth-year medical students at the University of Colorado following their clerkship year.

## Research Question

What is the current medical student's perception of LGBTQIA inclusivity within their anesthesiology rotations, and how does this influence their specialty choice? Specifically, how does this perception differ between LGBTQIA-identifying students vs. Non-LGBTQIA-identifying students.

## Methods and Materials

- A survey was provided to all fourth-year medical students at the University of Colorado School of Medicine upon completion of their clinical year, which has a required anesthesiology rotation.
- In addition, a survey was administered to third-year medical students that were part of the new LIC curriculum at CUSOM, as they did their anesthesiology rotation earlier.
- The survey was distributed through weekly email communication from the school to students.
- Participants were given \$10 Amazon gift card at completion of the survey.
- The survey assessed the perceived inclusivity of the field of anesthesiology and how anesthesiology compares to other peri-operative and non-perioperative specialties.
- The results were evaluated to compare the mean results from LGBTQIA identifying students and non-LGBTQIA identifying students.

## Results

- The survey was completed by 89 medical students at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. Of these, 14 surveys were incomplete and 75 total surveys were analyzed.
- The majority of students rotated through anesthesiology for 1-2 weeks. The minimum time was one day or less. The maximum time was over three weeks.
- Gender Identity of the respondents were as follows (Figure 1):
  - Cis-female (n=46), Cis-male (n=26), Trans-female (n=3)
- Sexual Orientation of respondents were as follows (Figure 2):
  - Heterosexual/straight (n=58), Gay/Lesbian (n=8), Bisexual (n=5), Other (n=3), Asexual (n=1)
- 58% of students participating in the survey indicated some interest in anesthesiology as a specialty.
- This pilot study demonstrated that it is feasible to obtain perception data about inclusivity from a majority of fourth year medical students through an online survey.
- Overall differences in answers to inclusivity questions were observed based on respondents' sexual orientation.
- For question 19, when asked about fear of negative ramifications if the student were open about their sexual orientation, 37.5% of students identifying as gay/lesbian answered "yes", compared to 0% of students identifying as heterosexual/straight (Figure 3).
- 62.5% of students identifying as gay/lesbian noted feeling uncomfortable sharing their sexual orientation, compared to 2.0% of students identifying as heterosexual/straight (Figure 4).
- 91.4% of heterosexual students felt that anesthesiology was either very or somewhat inclusive to the LGBTQIA community. 37.5% of gay/lesbian students and 20.0% of bisexual students felt that anesthesiology was either only a little/not at all inclusive (Figure 5).

### GENDER IDENTITY OF PARTICIPANTS

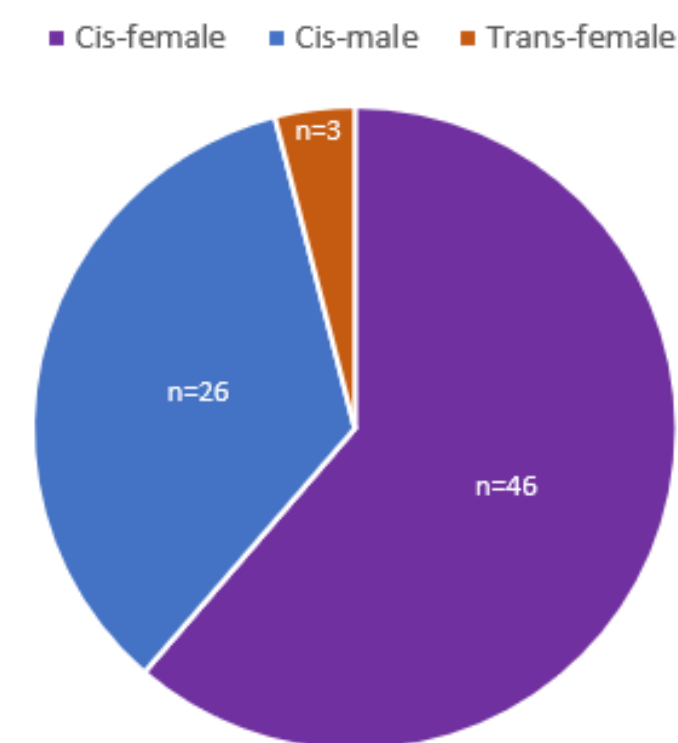


Figure 1: Survey participants' self-reported gender identity.

### SEXUAL ORIENTATION OF PARTICIPANTS

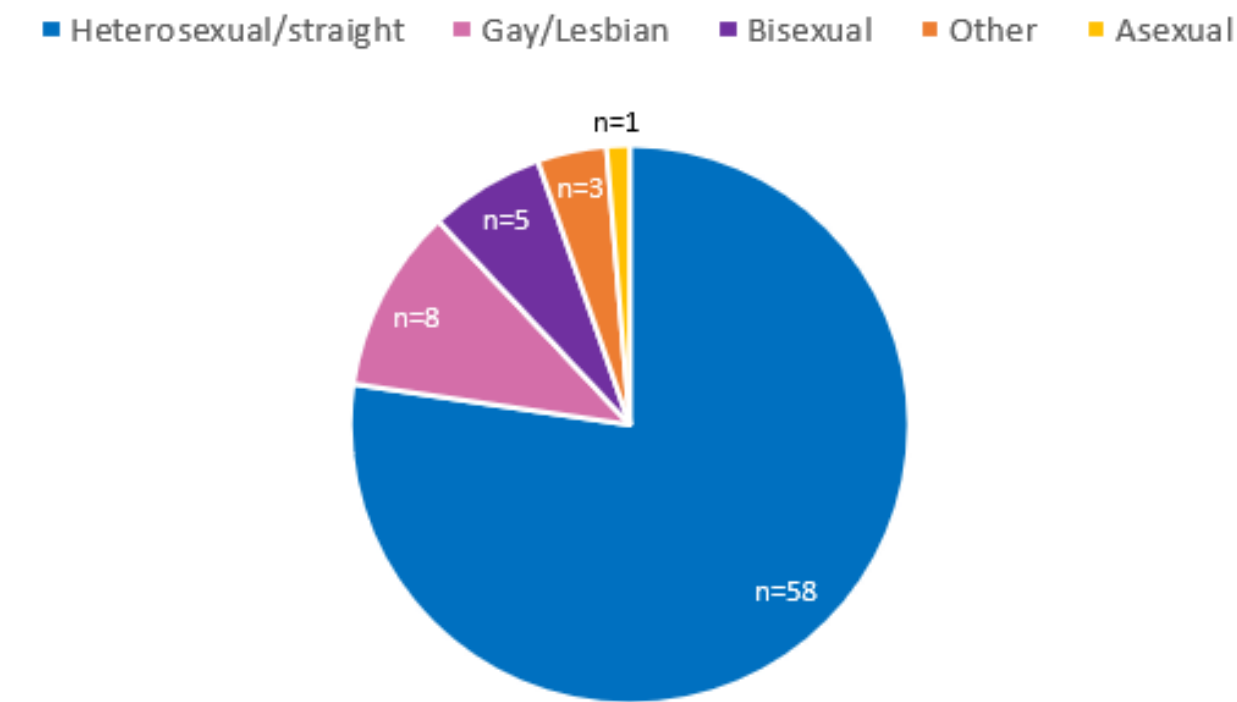


Figure 2: Survey participants' self-reported sexual orientation.

### ANSWER TO Q17 BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION

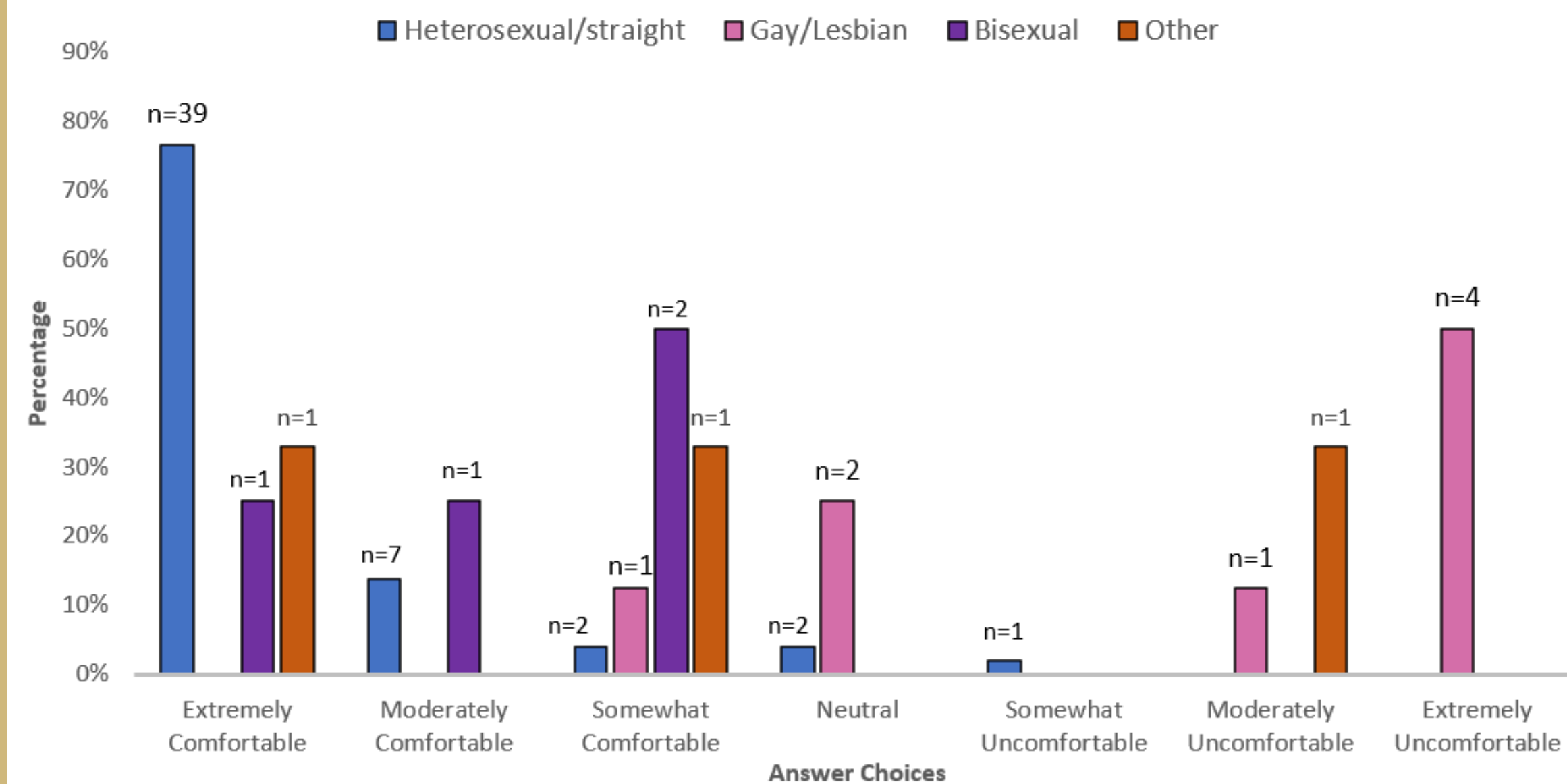


Figure 3: A comparison of participants' sexual orientation and their answer choices to question 17, "During your anesthesiology experience, how comfortable did you feel being open about your sexual orientation preferences?"

### ANSWER TO Q19 BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION

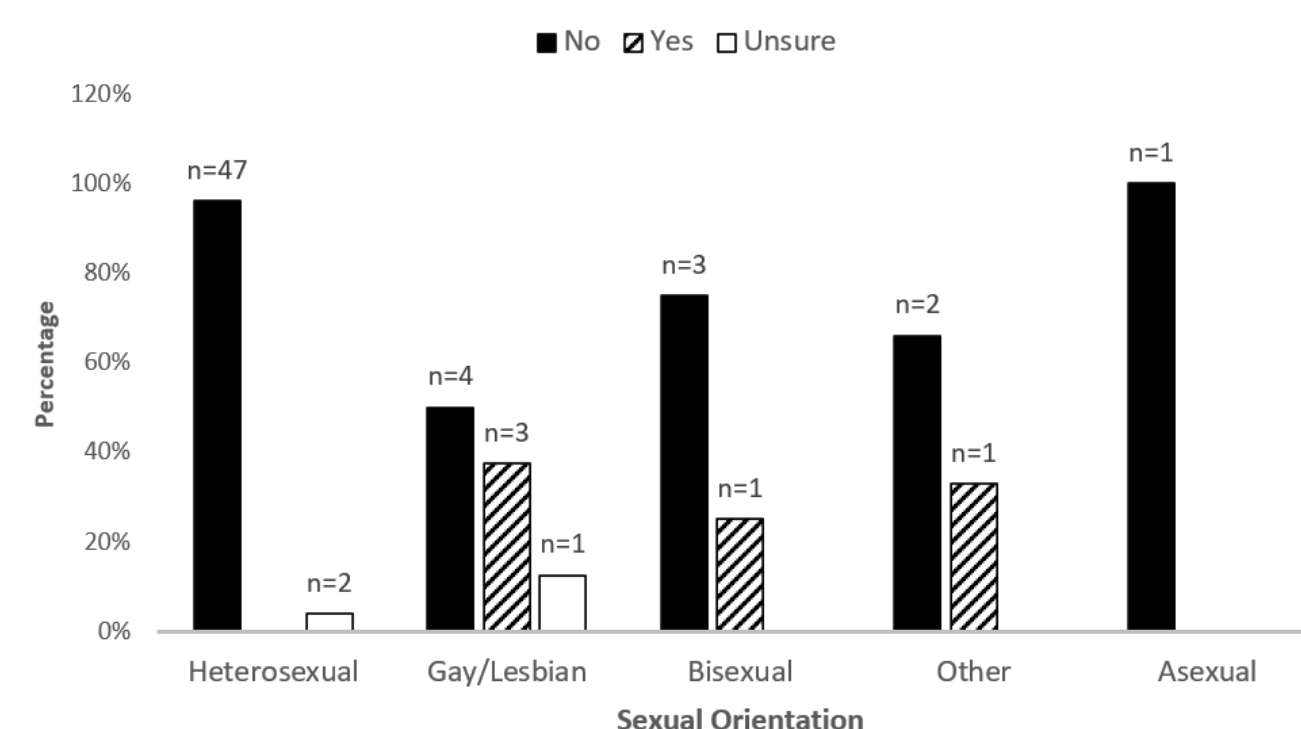


Figure 4: A comparison of participants' sexual orientation and their answer choices to question 19, "During your anesthesiology experience, did you feel there would be negative ramifications if you openly shared your sexual orientation preferences?"

### ANSWER TO Q26 BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION

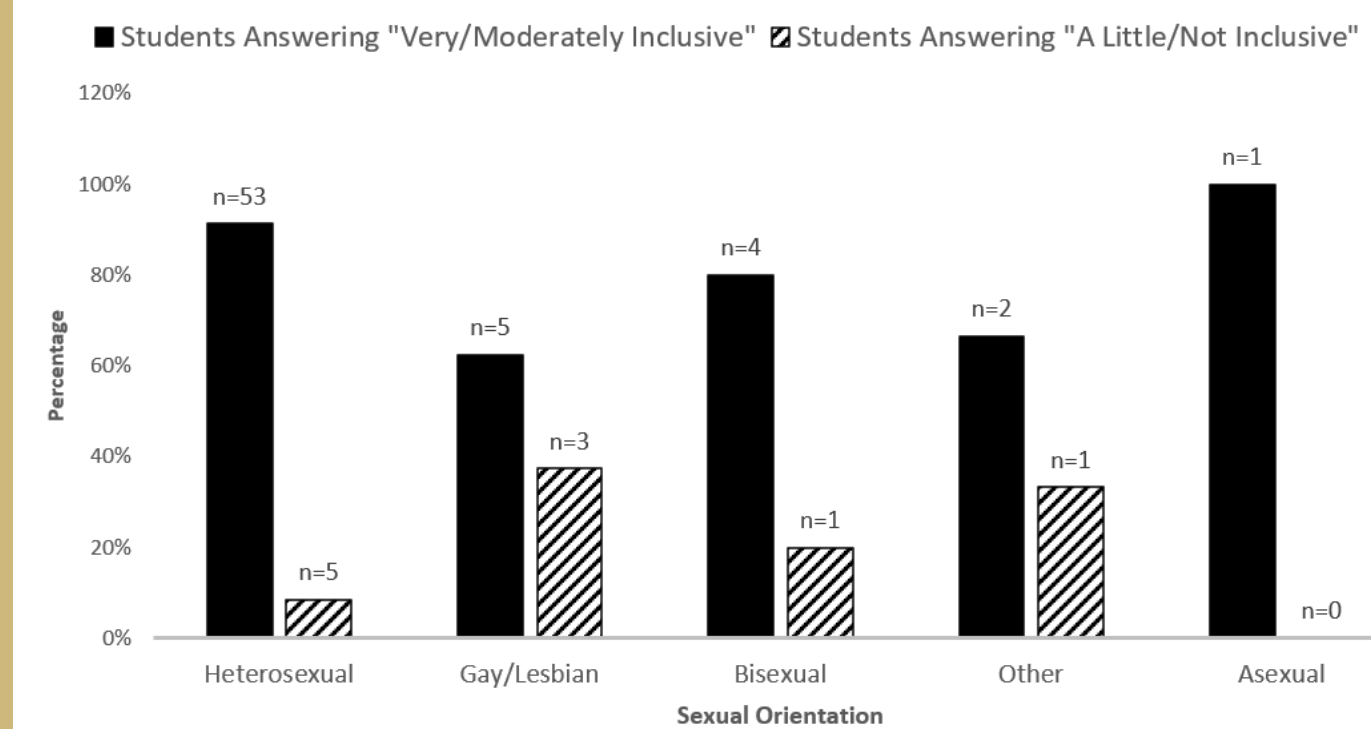


Figure 5: A comparison of participants' sexual orientation and their answer choices to question 26, "Overall, how inclusive of the LGBTQIA community did you perceive the anesthesiology department to be during your rotation?"

## Discussion

- A prior study has shown that the perception of inclusivity among LGBTQIA-identifying medical students influences their decision to pursue a specific specialty. Sitkin et al. confirmed this in their 2016 study which showed that the percentage of LGBTQIA-identifying members in a specialty was positively related to the perception of inclusivity for those identifying members (1).
- This pilot study demonstrates that it is feasible to obtain data on perceptions of inclusivity in students who have completed their core anesthesiology rotation through an online survey.
- This study identified trends in LGBTQIA-identifying students perceiving the inclusivity of anesthesiology differently than non-LGBTQIA-identifying students. There was a difference in level of comfort sharing their sexual orientation and fear of negative ramification in expressing this.
- A further evaluation of this finding is warranted to investigate if this perception of inclusivity is prevalent on a national level.
- To obtain baseline data on perceptions of inclusivity on a national level, we suggest conducting a multi-institutional study with the following hypothesis: Students who are LGBTQIA-identifying are less likely to perceive anesthesiology as inclusive than students who are non-LGBTQIA-identifying.
- Once these baseline data are obtained, the next step would be to perform interventions to improve inclusivity and investigate whether these interventions improve perceptions of inclusivity amongst medical students.
- Along with this research, it is important to also investigate what steps can be taken to promote an inclusive environment. Keuroghlian et al., detailed an approach to integrate sexual and gender minority (SGM) health content throughout the core medical curriculum at Harvard Medical School. There were several goals of this initiative, including designing a core curriculum and promoting an environment that is conducive for SGM education. This is one approach to work towards a more inclusive environment.

## Summary

- This study provides evidence that LGBTQIA-identifying medical students perceive less-inclusivity in the field of anesthesiology and that this may influence specialty choice. Next steps should also include conducting this study in other medical schools as this was only a study of feasibility and accessibility. While this provides evidence, further work should be conducted to see if this perception of inclusivity is prevalent on a national level.
- In addition, further investigation into ways of increasing the perception of inclusivity should be considered as this study discovered there is a need to address this concern. After interventions have been in place, this evaluation should be conducted again.

## References

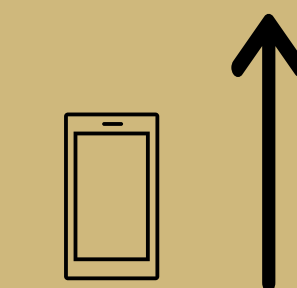
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Scan QR code to see the full survey that was sent to participants.