

CONNECTING OLDER ADULTS WITH STUDENTS THROUGH INTERPROFESSIONAL TELECARE (COAST-IT)

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INTRO

- Given the growing number of older adults, it is critical that future health care professionals are prepared to care for an aging population.
- Improvements in intergenerational communication and understanding may lead to improved care.
- COAST-IT, an interprofessional telecare-based program was developed to provide students the opportunity to improve their ability to communicate and connect with older adults.

METHODS

- Over 200 community-dwelling older adults were paired with students from PharmD, NP, Dental, and MD programs.
- Students made social phone calls every 1-2 weeks to their older adult partner (OAP) for at least 6 months.
- Cross-sectional surveys captured students' attitudes and confidence in communicating with older adults.

RESULTS

- 186/200 students completed the pre and post survey.

	Pre-survey (n, %)	Post survey (n, %)	p value
Ability to define ageism	74.05	80.43	0.045
Interest in caring for older adults	33.33	35.47	0.093
Stressed when talking to older adults	18.38	10.67	0.011

Table 1: Change in knowledge of and attitudes about older adults

STUDENT DELIVERED TELEPHONE PROGRAM IMPROVES CONFIDENCE IN COMMUNICATING WITH OLDER ADULTS: THE COAST-IT PROGRAM.

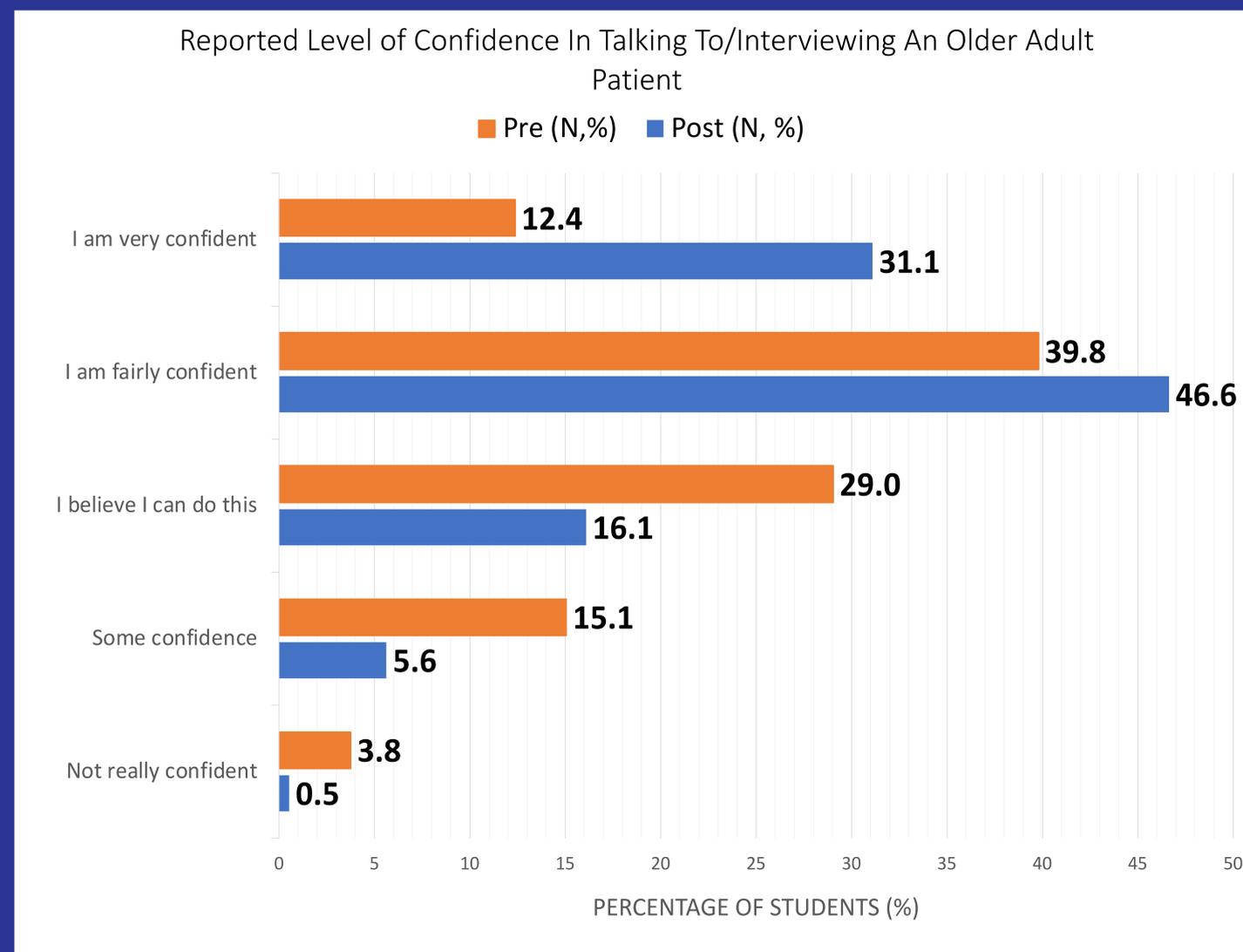


Figure 1: Self reported confidence level in student communication skills

Student Reflections

"I learned new and different ways to communicate with older adults. I gained a new friend that has so much knowledge and wisdom to share."

"...Speaking slowly, asking questions and giving extra time for my OAP to respond has worked well. I also try to give my OAP something else to look forward to besides a phone call...I have emailed her photos from recent skiing trips because she loves/misses the mountains. She loved it!"

CONCLUSIONS

- Participation in the COAST-IT program by health professional students is associated with improved attitudes and confidence in communicating with older adults.
- The COAST-IT program provides students a way to practice building longitudinal relationships that foster improved attitudes towards and communication skills early in their training.

NEXT STEPS

- Future program study will include an evaluation of the impact that COAST-IT has had on loneliness and perceived social isolation among OAPs.
- Further evaluation will include students' satisfaction with the program and fostering students' interest in caring for older adults.