

Wilderness Medicine Curriculum for First Year Rural Program Students

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Background

- The fields of wilderness and rural medicine are closely intertwined, as is demonstrated by the University of Colorado School of Medicine's Rural Program (CUSOM RP).
- During their clerkship year, CUSOM RP students live and learn in a rural Colorado location, many of which are home to unique wilderness landscapes.
- A foundational understanding of wilderness medicine content was proposed to be helpful for CUSOM RP students.

Objectives

- Design a wilderness medicine curriculum for first year CUSOM RP and evaluate for effectiveness in increasing student comfort in diagnosing and managing a subset of wilderness medicine pathology.
- Evaluate and enhance student perception of the importance of wilderness medicine training for future rural practitioners and garner interest in the field of wilderness medicine.

Methods

- A 1.5 hour session on high altitude physiology and illnesses was designed and given to 17 first year CUSOM RP students.
- A pre- and post-session survey was conducted to evaluate the session's impact:
 - Q1:** How interested are you in learning more about wilderness medicine?
 - Q2:** How relevant do you think wilderness medicine is to rural providers ?
 - Q3:** How comfortable do you feel explaining the pathophysiology of high altitude illnesses such as AMS, HAPE, and HACE?
 - Q4:** How confident are you in your ability to diagnose and treat high altitude illnesses?

Results

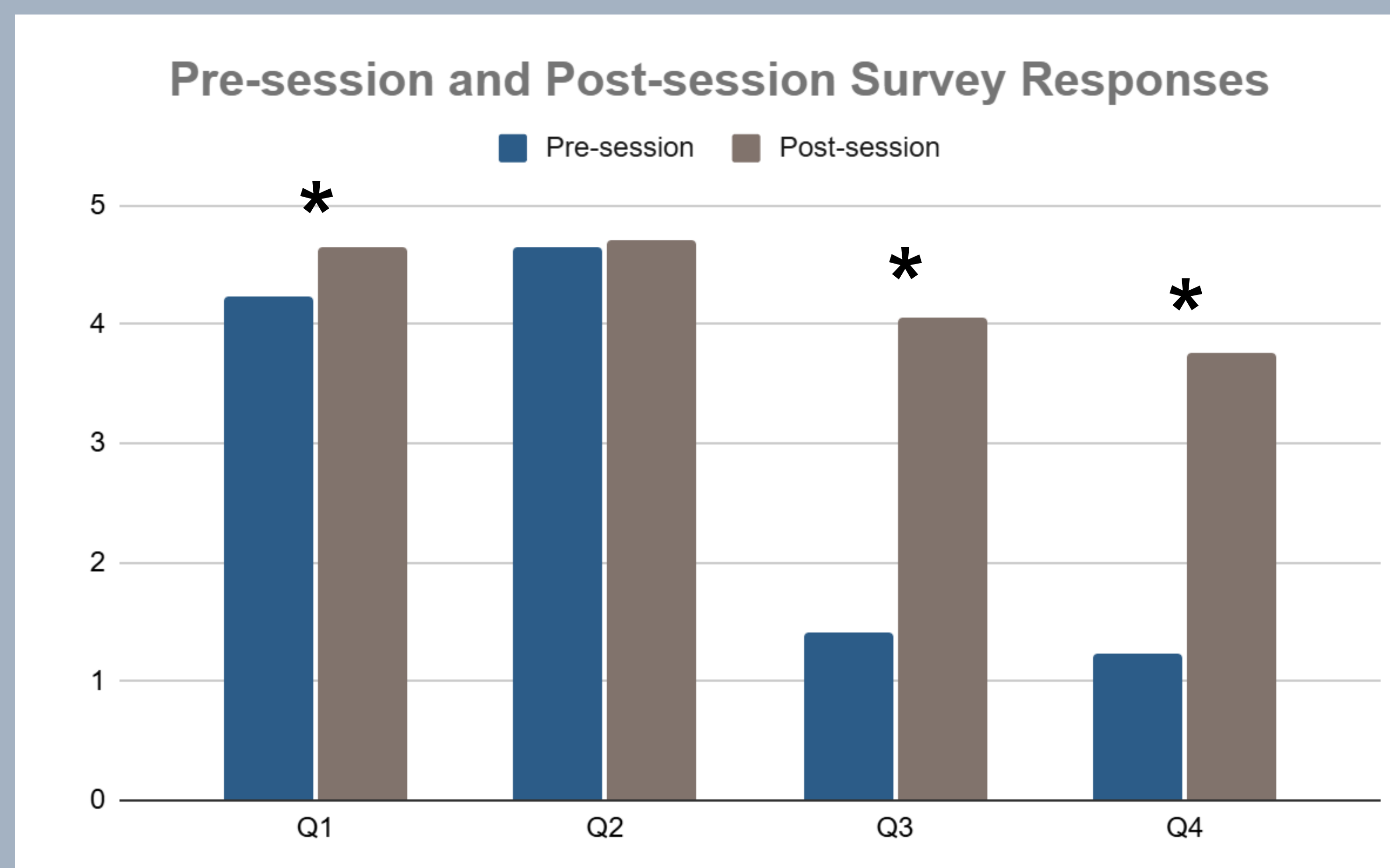


Figure 1: Mean responses for pre- and post-session survey for questions 1-4 (Q1-4). Asterisk indicates a significant difference.

- Student interest in wilderness medicine (Q1), understanding of high altitude physiology (Q3), and comfort in managing high altitude illnesses (Q4) all significantly increased (p-values 0.49, <0.05, <0.05, respectively).
- Perceived importance of wilderness medicine education for rural providers (Q2) also increased, although this difference was not significant (p-value 0.75).

Conclusions

- A dedicated wilderness medicine didactic session for rural-bound medical students was successful in increasing student understanding of the wilderness medicine topic.
- The session additionally helped to garner interest in wilderness medicine as well and demonstrate the importance of wilderness medicine education to the rural provider.
- More data is needed to re-demonstrate these patterns for other wilderness medicine topics and evaluate perceived usefulness of the session following rural clerkship.

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