



Unmasking Empathy: Bridging Quality of Care Gaps During a Pandemic

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Background

- Empathy is a crucial component in patient care as it provides a personal connection between provider and patient and influences health outcomes
- Empathetic treatment of patients leads to decreased complications, reduce length of hospital stay, decrease readmission rates, higher level of patient satisfaction, increased compliance, and higher quality of care overall
- Lack of empathy can lead to disconnection and burnout on a personal level and increased negligence and medical errors at the expense of patient health
- Previous studies have shown that healthcare workers rate their level of empathy higher than their corresponding patients do
- Previous studies have shown that mask wearing has a negative impact on the patient's perception of provider empathy
- Since the onset of the pandemic, widespread mask policies have limited the ability to perceive facial expression and associated empathy
- This project aims to promote empathetic care despite masking policies

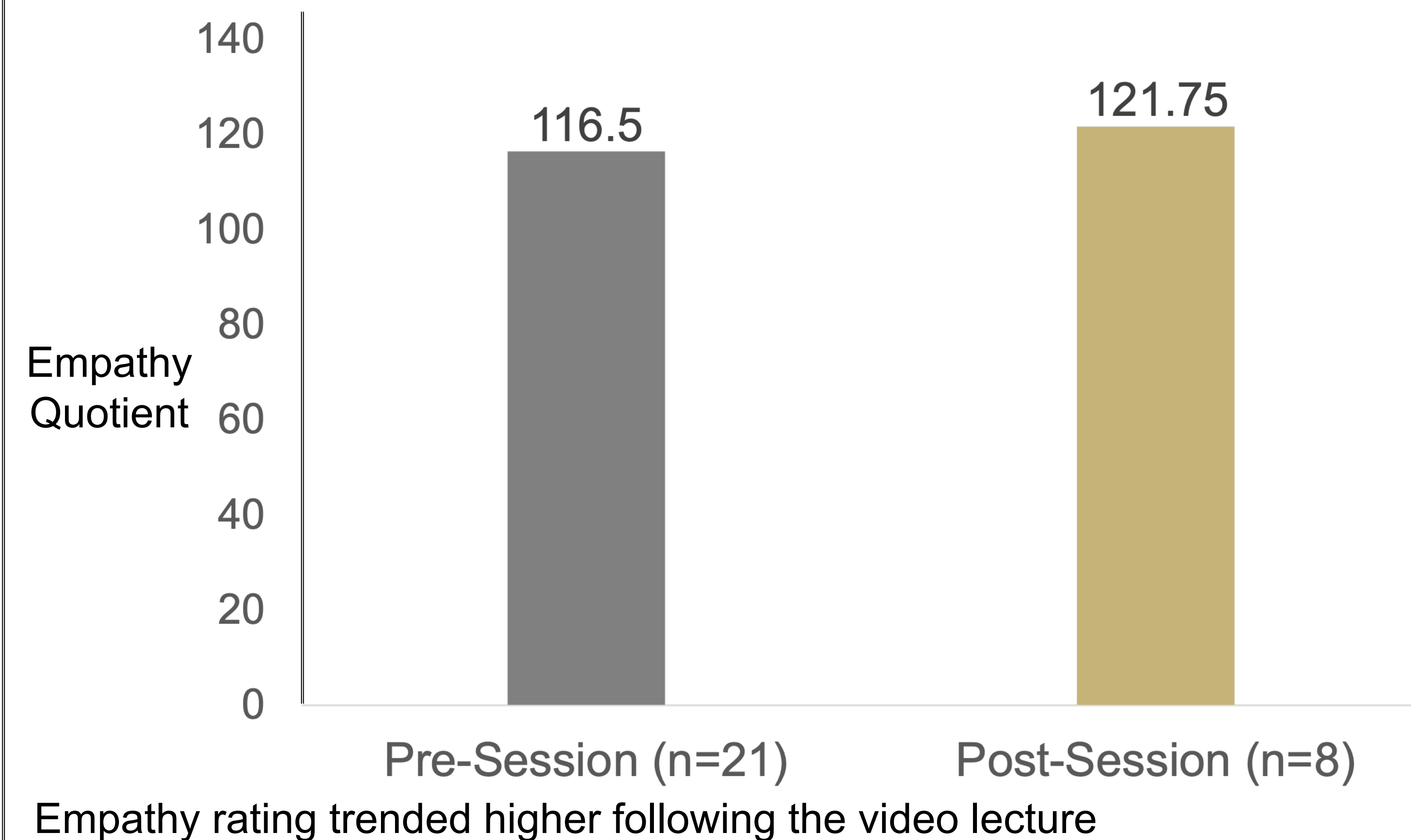
Objective

- A video lecture was created to provide information about the importance of empathy in the healthcare setting, how the perception of empathy has changed due to mask wearing policies during the COVID-19 pandemic and to provide tools to convey empathy towards patients.

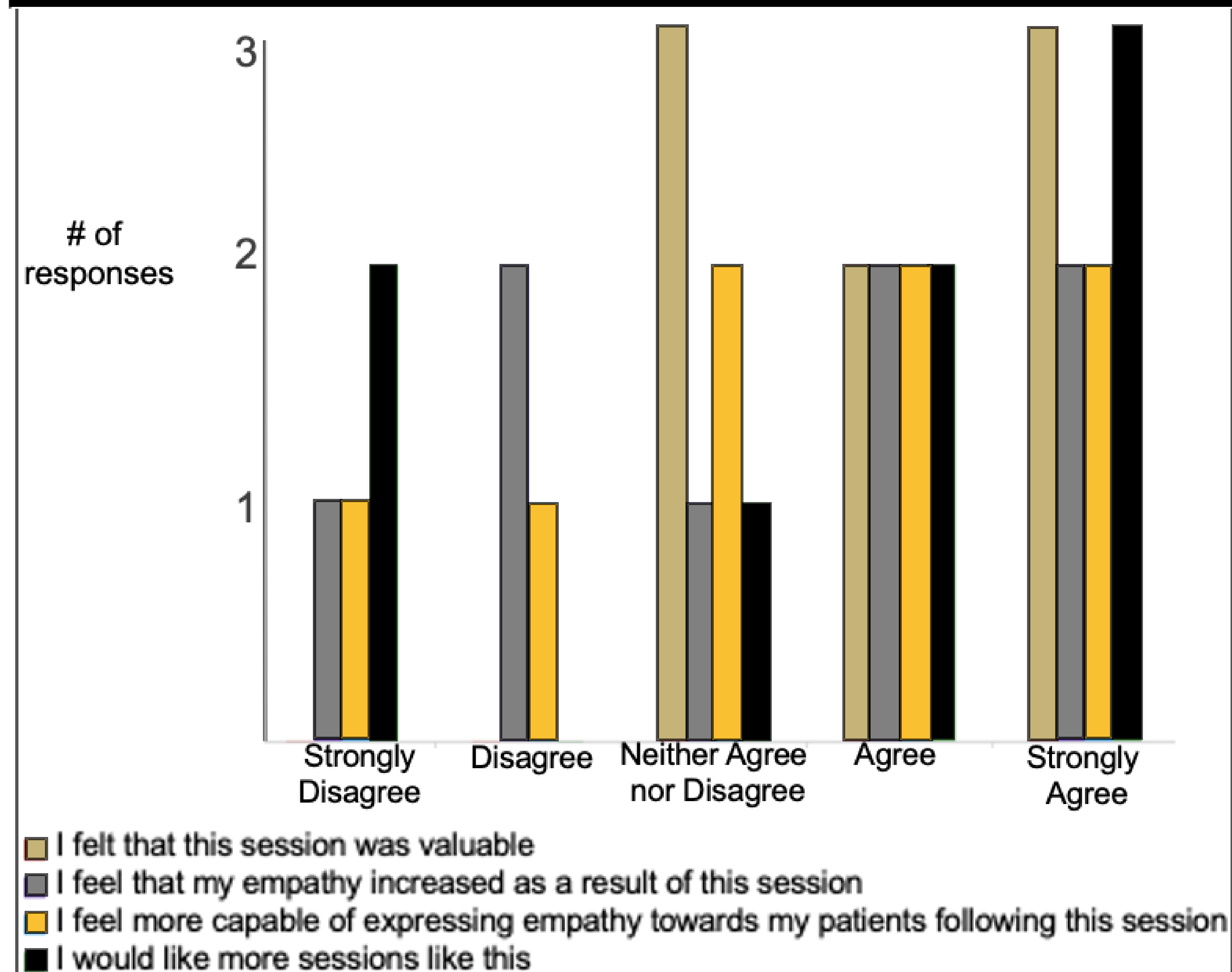
Methods

- Networking to identify resources in nursing education to appropriately proceed with project
- Utilized the Jefferson Scale of Empathy tool to identify empathy score prior to intervention
- Created the video lecture about empathy and tools to express empathy to patients while wearing a mask, as well as strengthen empathy as a skill
- Utilized the Jefferson Scale of Empathy tool to identify if there was any change in empathy score following intervention

Evaluation



Provider Attitude Toward Empathy Session (n=8)



Unmasking Empathy

Memorial Hospital
Quality Improvement Project
Ann Rowland
MD Candidate Class of 2022



Video Lecture Link: <https://youtu.be/CEIVHZCW5EM>

Discussion

- Due to limitations of survey completion, it is difficult to draw conclusions from the preliminary data
- Preliminary data indicates that empathy can increase with training on empathy skills
- In the future, the intervention could be extended throughout the hospital system to provide empathy skills to a larger population of healthcare workers
- Gather information from current participants to identify ways to make session more valuable and helpful
- In the future, it would be valuable to collect data from patients about their perception of empathy to identify if there is any change in perception of empathy before and after empathy skill training

Conclusions

- Providing skills and support surrounding the expression of empathy with mask wearing can improve self reported empathy scores, increased empathetic care of patients, and potentially better patient outcomes.

Reference

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