



# Evaluation of a pilot standardized patient curriculum related to culturally sensitive communication

Tiana Walker, MSIII, L. Brett Whalen, MSIII, Marc Vetter, MSIII, Andrew Parsons, MD, Megan Bray, MD, Maryellen Gusic, MD<sup>1</sup>

1. School of Medicine, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia



## BACKGROUND

- Training in sensitive discussions, such as the topic of race and discrimination, is necessary to help students develop skills to forge meaningful patient-physician relationships. However, there is little consensus about how to implement learning activities to promote skill development for use in clinical settings.
- A pilot activity incorporating a simulated patient encounter was implemented for clerkship phase students to meet the following learning objectives:
  1. Help medical students develop the communication skills necessary to navigate a clinical encounter in which their patient expresses racial bias.
  2. Demonstrate compassionate, yet situationally appropriate care in a racially-hostile clinical environment.
  3. Practice strategies to reject racism expressed by patients and resist acquiescing to demands that certain providers not care for patients simply because of the color of their skin

## EVALUATION GOALS

- Assess students' beliefs about the need for, and importance of a curriculum related to culturally sensitive communication
- Assess students' perspectives about the effectiveness of the learning activity; specifically contributions to their confidence in their skills in engaging in challenging communication

## METHODS

- Students were recruited via email to participate in a 15-minute encounter with a standardized patient (SP) in which the SP dismissed the student's colleague because of the colleague's race due to racism
- After the activity, a questionnaire was sent to all students in the class; participating and nonparticipating students
- Descriptive analyses were performed

Table 1

The curriculum already has sufficient learning activities to prepare students to engage with patients in a discussion about racism in the clinical setting

|                                 | Disagree | Neutral | Agree |
|---------------------------------|----------|---------|-------|
| Participant Respondents n=31    | 87%      | 6.5%    | 6.5%  |
| Non-Participant Respondents n=9 | 55.5%    | 33%     | 11%   |

Table 2

Indicate the likelihood that you will use skills you practiced during the SP encounter in an upcoming encounter with a patient

|                              | Unlikely | Unsure | Likely |
|------------------------------|----------|--------|--------|
| Participant Respondents n=31 | 3.2      | 22%    | 74.2%  |

## RESULTS

- 65 (39% of class) students participated in the SP encounter
- 24% of the class responded to the questionnaire (Participants in the activity + Non-participants)
- 90% of respondents reported that learning activities to enhance skill in engaging with patients about racism in the clinical setting is very important
- 61% reported that the SP activity allowed them to reflect on their performance and identify areas of strength and areas in need of additional practice
- 52% rated the SP encounter as having moderate to major effect on their ability to develop effective patient-physician relationships

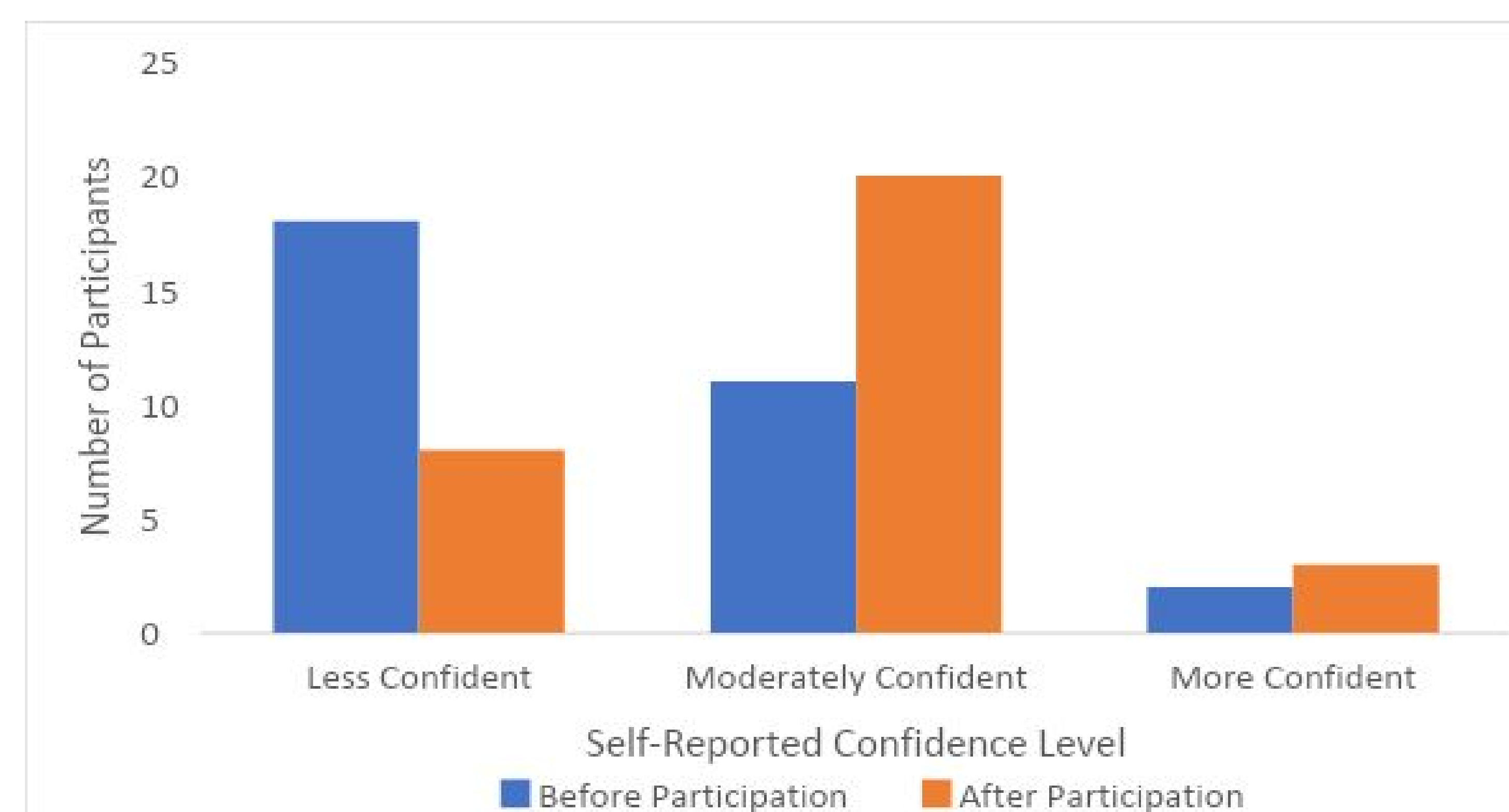
## CONCLUSIONS

- Based on our experience of participating in the activity, data from evaluation, and the literature, future directions include:
  - Enhancement of the pilot activity to expanding SP response options to allows the SP to modulate their reaction/responses based on the approach taken by the student
    - Example: allow for student to reach resolution with SP if student is able to definitively communicate the anti-discriminatory values of the UVA Health System
  - Implementation of an integrated curriculum exploring a variety of challenging communication topics during the intersession weeks of the clerkship phase
  - Providing structured debriefing opportunities for students in both group and individual settings (FCM groups and 1:1 with FCM coaches) to allow for personal reflection and learning goal development

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Drs. Gauri, Hilton, and Luna for their assistance in the development of the case used for the learning activity

FIGURE 1



**Figure 1.** Students confidence in their abilities to engage patients in discussions about racism in the clinical setting before and after the SP encounter (N = 31)