

Keep Psychiatry in Mind: Integrating Psychiatry into the General Medical Curriculum with Emails



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Keep Psychiatry in Mind



As you rotate through the Internal Medicine clerkship, **KEEP IN MIND** the reciprocal relationship between depression and heart disease or diabetes.

In patients with coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure and diabetes, the risk of comorbid depression is doubled. Depression is under-recognized and under-treated.

In turn, depression:

- Nearly **doubles** the risk for major cardiac events and mortality in heart disease.
- Leads to poorer outcomes in congestive heart failure.

What to do?

Have a high index of suspicion for depression in patients with these conditions.

The **PHQ-2** is a simple screening tool for depression.

Over the past 2 weeks have you been bothered by:

- 1) Little interest and pleasure in doing things? Yes or No
- 2) Feeling down, depressed or hopeless? Yes or No

If the patient answers "yes" to either question, pursue further.



You have been randomly selected to receive this educational resource. Please do not forward the emails, or discuss the content with students outside of your track. Participation is voluntary and will not affect your clerkship evaluation.

Sample SHELF question

A 55-year old female patient with Type 2 diabetes presents to her primary care physician for her quarterly visit. Her medical history is significant for hypertension and hyperlipidemia. Her medications include glyburide, 2.5 mg per day; metformin, 1,000 mg twice daily; enteric coated aspirin, 81 mg per day; atenolol/hydrochlorothiazide, 25/12.5 mg per day, and atorvastatin, 40 mg per day. She is a non-smoker. Her vital signs and physical exam are within normal limits. Labs are remarkable for a creatinine of 1.1 mg/dl, glycosylated hemoglobin of 6.2% and a total cholesterol of 140 mg/dl. Over the next five years, which of the following medical illnesses is most likely to occur in this patient?

Click on a response for an explanation of the correct answer:

- a. Myocardial infarction
- b. Peripheral neuropathy
- c. Renal failure
- d. Major depressive episode
- e. Retinopathy

Depression in diabetes is associated with:

- Poor adherence to medication and diet.
- A decrease in glycemic control with more complications.
- A reduction in quality of life.

Abstract

Our project, "Keep Psychiatry In Mind," proposes to insert teaching of the behavioral sciences beyond the psychiatry clerkship and into the awareness of third-year medical students while they rotate on other specialties. Our goal is to remind students to apply these principles outside the traditional psychiatric setting. Traditionally, medical students on clinical rotations receive instruction on principles of behavioral health and psychiatry only during a focused psychiatry clerkship. However, patients with behavioral health issues present in a variety of non-psychiatric settings, such as primary care or the emergency room. The challenge for medical educators is to enhance integration of psychiatric skills and knowledge into the practice of other medical specialties, where most patient care is delivered.

We utilized email as a vehicle for inserting psychiatric concepts during other clerkships. Email is used for official communication from clerkship directors to students and is a convenient method for reaching students in different locations and settings. Sending intermittent reminders about integration of psychiatric principles utilizes the concept of Spaced Learning, which refers to the delivery of brief morsels of information repeated over time intervals rather than a bolus of information delivered all at once. We sent monthly emails with content targeted to the pertinent non-psychiatric clerkship, building on a previous study that uses emails to integrate geriatric content into general psychiatric clerkships.

Research question:

What is the effect of a cross-cutting curriculum modification for medical students using monthly, targeted emails to integrate psychiatric concepts into non-psychiatric clerkships on (1) attitudes towards psychiatry, (2) confidence in applying psychiatric principles to clinical practice and (3) retention of the information?



*Attitudes
 Confidence
 Retention*

Hypotheses:

- 1) Students receiving the intervention will demonstrate stronger positive attitudes toward the integration of behavioral science into non-psychiatric settings compared to the control group.
- 2) Students receiving the intervention will demonstrate increased confidence in integrating principles of behavioral science into non-psychiatric settings compared to the control group.
- 3) Students receiving the intervention will demonstrate increased knowledge retention on the email content compared to a control group.

Study group:

- The pilot group is the third-year medical student class at the University of Michigan. Class size is 177 students, 50% female, average age at graduation 27.5 years.
- Students are assigned to one of 12 tracks, cohorts who participate on clerkships in sequence together. The intervention was delivered to tracks chosen by random cluster assignment by drawing the tracks out of a hat, to avoid contamination of the control group by conversation among classmates.
- Students received a pre- and post-survey on attitudes and knowledge. Half of the post-survey knowledge items came from KPIM questions, while the other half were newly generated. The response rate was 52.0%.
- Two 30-minute focus groups were conducted with users and non-users, 26 students total.

Key findings:

- Students opened about half of emails distributed (49.4%).
- Analysis of knowledge retention and changes in attitudes and confidence is ongoing.

Focus groups:

Students who used KPIM:

- found the emails to be succinct and "high yield."
- valued the sample case, which is "great for application and reinforcement."
- appreciated the timing of the message, which "encourages thinking outside of rotation-specific problems."

Students who did not use KPIM suggested:

- highlighting the case even more.
- simplifying the layout so it looks less "like a newsletter."
- previewing the resource in orientation meetings.

Implications for Teaching:

Preliminary results suggest that students value supplementary learning resources. However, to foster high use of the resources, they need to be **concise, applied, and highlighted in advance of distribution.**

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