

Characterization of the mental health resources utilized by pharmacy students during the COVID-19 pandemic

Melissa Marietto, PharmD Candidate 2021, Alexandra LaStella, PharmD Candidate 2021

Farah Khorassani, PharmD, BCPP

Introduction

- ❖ Worsening of psychiatric symptoms among the general public has been noted throughout the COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic
- ❖ Students and employees in healthcare have experienced a notable increase in depression/anxiety symptoms throughout COVID-19
- ❖ Uncertainty, loss of family members, and the transition to remote learning on March 10th, 2020 contributed to the increased demand for mental health care among students

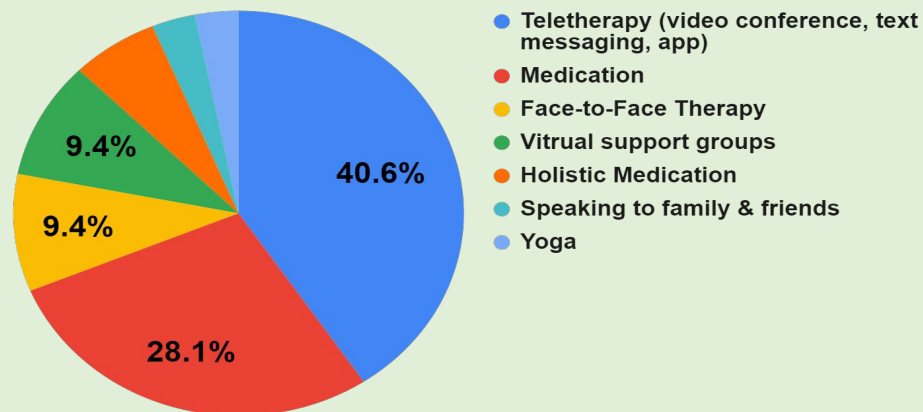
Purpose

- ❖ To assess the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of pharmacy students
- ❖ To characterize utilization of mental health services
- ❖ To investigate barriers to treatment

Results

- ❖ Prior to COVID-19, 22% of students were diagnosed with or received treatment for a psychiatric disorder
- ❖ Seventy-four percent and 51% of students reported an increase in symptoms of anxiety and depression during COVID-19, respectively
- ❖ Regarding their most significant barrier to treatment, 24% of students reported personal stigma, 14% reported issues with insurance/finances
- ❖ After school closure, 35% of students sought mental health treatment, 28% were first time utilizers
- ❖ Of those who received mental health care, 41% utilized teletherapy, 34% utilized pharmacotherapy
- ❖ Ninety percent of students continued medication(s); Five students were prescribed new medication(s)
- ❖ Fifty-three percent of students reported a higher likelihood of engaging with telepsychiatry services post-COVID-19

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Methods

- ❖ IRB-approved, 31-question survey distributed via email and social media platforms over the course of two weeks
- ❖ Participation was anonymous and voluntary by pharmacy students in professional years 1 (P1) through four (P4)
- ❖ Surveyors examined patient demographics, pre-COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 psychiatric diagnoses, self-reported psychiatric symptoms, and mental health care utilization

Conclusion

- ❖ A significant number of pharmacy students experienced new or worsening anxiety and depression after the start of the pandemic
- ❖ Students were most likely to receive outpatient treatment, prescription medication, and teletherapy
- ❖ Educating students through university-sponsored programs and peer support groups may improve access and support pharmacy students during the pandemic