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SURVEY OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT OBSTETRICS FISTULAS IN MEDICAL STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES: ARE WE EDUCATING STUDENTS ABOUT THIS DEVASTATING CONDITION?

Hypothesis / aims of study

To assess the knowledge of pathology and epidemiology of obstetric fistulas amongst US medical students.

Study design, materials and methods

A cross sectional survey was conducted in eight schools across the United States. An electronic, self administered questionnaire was sent to 5,103 medical students (Table 1.). The questionnaire was on a web-based module accessed through an emailed link with a description of the survey, which contained eighteen questions about the epidemiology, pathology, and treatment of obstetric fistulas (Figure 1.). The study was performed over a period of six months from September 2008 through February 2009, and all students enrolled in the participating eight medical schools were invited to take part in the study. The invitation was sent to the students' school email addresses once a week for a period of four weeks for a total of four email invitations. This was consistent throughout all eight programs. Institutional Review Board approval was obtained at all participating institutions.

Results

Of the 1,089 students from eight medical schools that initially began the survey, 965 completed this voluntary and anonymous survey (21.3% initial response rate with 88.6% completion rate). 397 students (41.1%) were male and 892 students (92.4%) were below the age of 30 (Table 2). Overall, first, second, third and fourth year students averaged 11/18 (60.7%) correct on this survey. The knowledge of obstetric fistula increased during medical school with first year medical students achieving 10/18 (55%) correct and senior medical students achieving 12/18 (67%) correct (P=0.1).

Interpretation of results

US medical students' knowledge of obstetric fistulas in developing countries does not increase significantly over four years of medical school education.

Concluding message

Obstetric fistula is a major problem afflicting mostly developing nations. Further effort should be placed in the United States to improve medical student knowledge of this devastating condition.

Figure 1: An example of one of the study questions and the correct response rate.

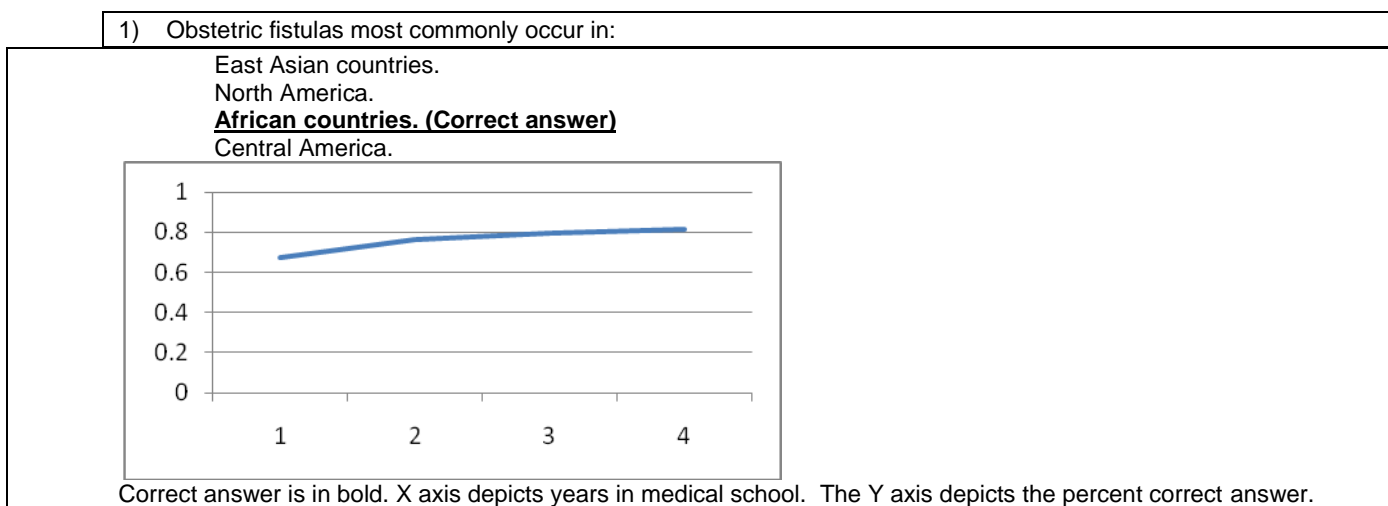


Table 1.

Medical School	Enrolment
UVM	473
OSU	342
OU	659

Loyola	581
Baylor	750
UT San Antonio	897
Colorado	655
George Washington	746
Total	5103

Table 2.

Age	20-29	892
	>30 years	73
Ethnicity	Caucasian	805
	Hispanic	65
	African American	33
	Native American	21
	Other	41
Total		965

References

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3. Drain, Paul K., A. Primack, D. Hunt, W. Fawzi, K. Holmes, and P. Gardner; "Global Health in Medical Education: A Call for More Training and Opportunities"; Academic Medicine, March 2007; Vol 82, No 3, pp 226-230.

<i>Specify source of funding or grant</i>	None
<i>Is this a clinical trial?</i>	No
<i>What were the subjects in the study?</i>	HUMAN
<i>Was this study approved by an ethics committee?</i>	Yes
<i>Specify Name of Ethics Committee</i>	The University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board IRB# 14179
<i>Was the Declaration of Helsinki followed?</i>	Yes
<i>Was informed consent obtained from the patients?</i>	No