Teaching Residents Teamwork, Empathy and Communication Through Medical Improv

Sessions on Medical Education
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Session Plan: Residency and Fellowship Programs must not only provide robust clinical training in their given specialty, but must also incorporate a solid curriculum in the soft skills (such as teamwork, communication, professionalism) that are integral to a physicians career development. Although curricula on these topics are available, there are limited formal guidelines for residency and fellowship program leadership to draw upon. Medical Improv is a dynamic teaching tool that uses the principles and techniques of improvisational theater to promote teamwork, communication, leadership skills, and emotional intelligence for physicians in training. Rather than improv comedy, medical improv focuses on learning rather than performing through carefully selected and adapted exercises with targeted discussion about the medical environment and patient care. Medical Improv focuses on the soft skills that require a non-traditional teaching approach to nurture new behaviors. Improv training is particularly helpful in medical education because it builds trainees skill-sets in complex, interpersonal behaviors. The literature shows that improv enhances empathy and understanding and emotional intelligence of [trainees], and it translates into enhanced understanding for patients from other backgrounds or cultures. The development of such skills is widely relevant to learners at the undergraduate medical education level as well as established physicians looking to build communication skills across the continuum of lifelong learning.

This workshop will be extremely interactive and provide participants with exposure to the curriculum created for the residents at Grand Strand Medical Center. Our session will be broken down into four key areas. We will begin with an activity called Yes And. This activity will not only serve as an icebreaker to allow participants to get to know each other, but it will also introduce the audience to basic improv techniques (15 minutes). Immediately following the activity there will be an interactive workshop where all objectives will be discussed at length. Discussion will focus on application of these theater techniques into a healthcare delivery setting. Areas of focus include: ground rules for improv, how medical improv can improve teamwork, patient satisfaction, as well as sample improv exercises (30 minutes). During the third portion of this workshop, attendees will have the opportunity to participate in another improv activity and debrief (15 minutes). The workshop will conclude with a question and answer session as well as audience reflections on the ability to integrate similar exercises into their own institutions (15 minutes). Participants will be leave this workshop with handouts that highlight improv exercises that they can take back to their institutions and use to create and implement a medical improv curriculum.

Learning Objectives: At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:
- Highlight the initial ground rules that must be established to ensure a safe space for all participants.
- Discuss how improv can improve teamwork, information transfer, and patient satisfaction.
- Detail exercise selection that aligns with medical goals and skills, along with bullet points to lead a target discussion