

Patterns in pharmacy student mental health disorder prevalence, treatment, and resource utilization

Andrea Whitaker, PharmD Candidate, Avery Risinger, PharmD Candidate, and Stephanie Hunziker, PharmD, BCMTMS

Abstract

Introduction: Many pharmacy students are affected by depression and anxiety, possibly due at least in part to their rigorous academic workload and lack of free time for self-care. The purpose of this study is to assess the prevalence of depression and/or anxiety among students at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) School of Pharmacy and evaluate the use of treatment and other resources. This population will be compared to undergraduate and graduate level SIUE School of Business students to determine whether there is a difference between healthcare and non-healthcare majors.

Methods: This qualitative study (IRB #2134) included a Phase 2 survey of all SIUE first through fourth year School of Pharmacy students (P1, P2, P3, and P4) as well as SIUE School of Business students pursuing a Bachelors or Masters degree. The primary outcome focuses on rates of students' depression and/or anxiety and related medication usage following enrollment and participation in their degree programs. To assess potential perceived causality, students were asked whether they feel their curriculum has negatively impacted their mental health.

Results: The survey results indicated 72% of all respondents reported having depression and/or anxiety. Rates were highest among PharmD students (78.3%), though also high among Masters (75%) and Bachelors (69%) degree business students. However, only 30% of respondents reported taking medications for their conditions, and only 20% indicated they currently attend therapy sessions with a mental health specialist. In terms of what experiences have contributed to stress or negatively impacted mental health, school was the most common source, identified by 85% of all respondents (100% of pharmacy students and 79% of business students).

Conclusion: High rates of depression and/or anxiety were seen among students, regardless of being a pharmacy or business major. Students from both sides largely felt much could be done in the way of improving wellness initiatives and support from faculty and staff at SIUE. These results will be shared with the School of Pharmacy's Well-Being and Resilience Committee and the School of Business.