

## **Attitudes and Readiness of Student Pharmacists: Results of a Novel Substance-Related Care Curriculum**

*Joel M HILLMAN<sup>1</sup>, Rebekah J MOLES<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> School of Pharmacy, Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney, AUSTRALIA.

Presenter's email: [joel.hillman@sydney.edu.au](mailto:joel.hillman@sydney.edu.au)

**Introduction:** Pharmacists continuously provide care relating to substance use, but student training does not adequately prepare pharmacists to competently provide safer and quality care to this population.

**Methods:** A novel substance curriculum was delivered by a substance-specialised pharmacist to final-year student pharmacists. Quantitative methods evaluated student performance against rubrics covering clinical competence and interpersonal communication skills. Separately, qualitative methods captured student experience, perspectives, and subjective pre-post change in stigma and personal opinions.

**Results:** Both student competence and confidence substantially improved following intervention. Students found simulated cases enhanced understanding and readiness to provide care. Stigma was reduced, though interestingly was already low.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Specific simulated substance-related care training improves student pharmacist confidence, capacity, and appropriateness of engagement with people who use substances. Future work should expand involvement of people with lived experience. Students strongly describe tangible benefits in clinical understanding and separately in personal perspective. Students overwhelmingly described personal impact, learning, and improvement in understanding. Rarely, some students reported persisting personal cognitive dissonance, which should be targeted in future research.

**Implications for Practice or Policy:** Appropriately designed and carefully planned interventions can improve quantitative clinical competence as well as qualitative confidence in the delivery of care by student pharmacists for people who use substances. Future work must permanently embed substance-related care into the curricula of all schools of pharmacy and continue to develop competence in this area.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:** This work was supported by a grant from the Pharmacy Research Trust NSW and from the NSW Ministry of Health (Q0046/RG907). Prospective ethics approval granted by the University of Sydney HREC (2021/HE000507).