

September 2019

# A Prospective Study of Medical Student Mental Health and Attitudes of Mental Illness Disclosure

Michael Castle

Ian Fletcher

Aaron Scarpa

Orrin Myers

Elizabeth Lawrence

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/hsc\\_ed\\_day](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/hsc_ed_day)

---

## Recommended Citation

Castle, Michael; Ian Fletcher; Aaron Scarpa; Orrin Myers; and Elizabeth Lawrence. "A Prospective Study of Medical Student Mental Health and Attitudes of Mental Illness Disclosure." (2019). [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/hsc\\_ed\\_day/39](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/hsc_ed_day/39)

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Health Sciences Center Events at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in HSC Education Day by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [amywinter@unm.edu](mailto:amywinter@unm.edu).

# A Prospective Study of Medical Students' Perceived Mental Health and Preferences for Self-Disclosure

---

MICHAEL CASTLE BA, IAN FLETCHER BA, AARON SCARPA  
BS, ORRIN MYERS PHD, ELIZABETH LAWRENCE MD.

# Conflicts of Interest

---

The Authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

# Objectives

---

By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Discuss how often medical students perceive they have a mental health diagnosis
2. Describe student attitudes towards disclosure of mental health to ERAS or the NMMB.
3. Identify reasons for non-disclosure

# Background

---

- Medical students experience higher rates of anxiety and depression than their age-matched peers. [1]
- Practicing physicians are reluctant to seek care for mental health due to fear of career repercussions. [2]
- Little is known about whether or not medical students would self-disclose a mental health concern on either Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS<sup>®</sup>) or state licensing applications.

# Methods

---

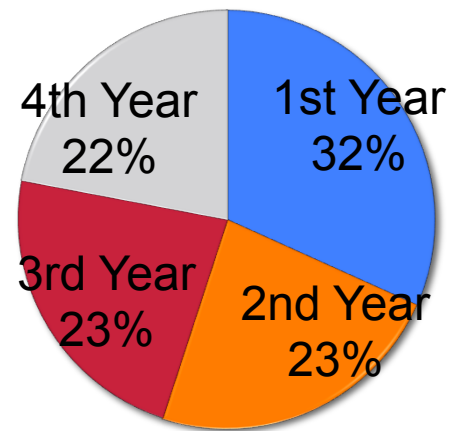
- 10-question anonymous survey sent in July 2018 to the classes of 2019-2022 and in July 2019 to the classes of 2020-2023.
- These questions explored year of enrollment, self-perceived mental health diagnoses, likelihood of pursuing mental health care, likelihood of disclosure of diagnoses on residency and licensing applications, and the reasons for not disclosing.

# Results

---

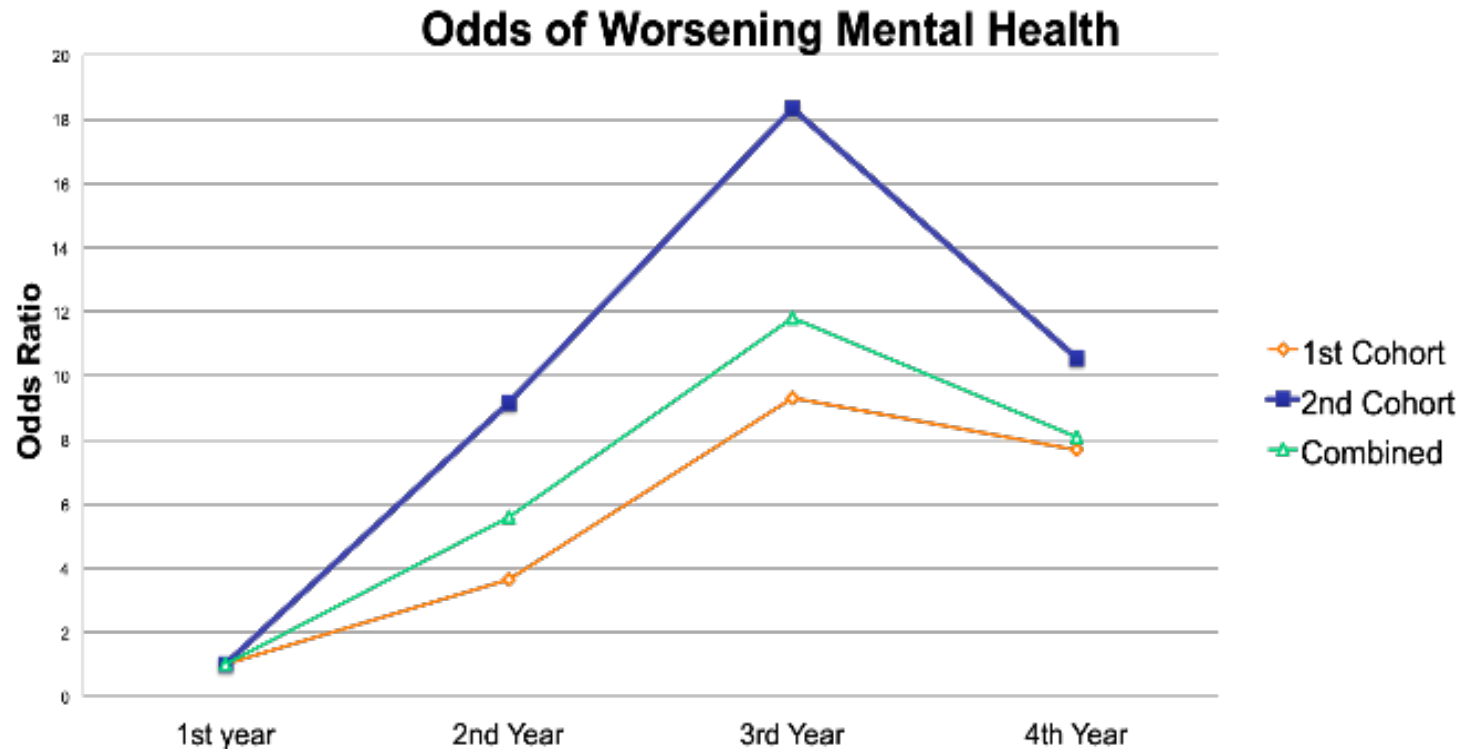
Average response rate of the two years was 49.8% (391 respondents). At least 45% of students recall retaking the survey.

## Total Combined Survey Respondents



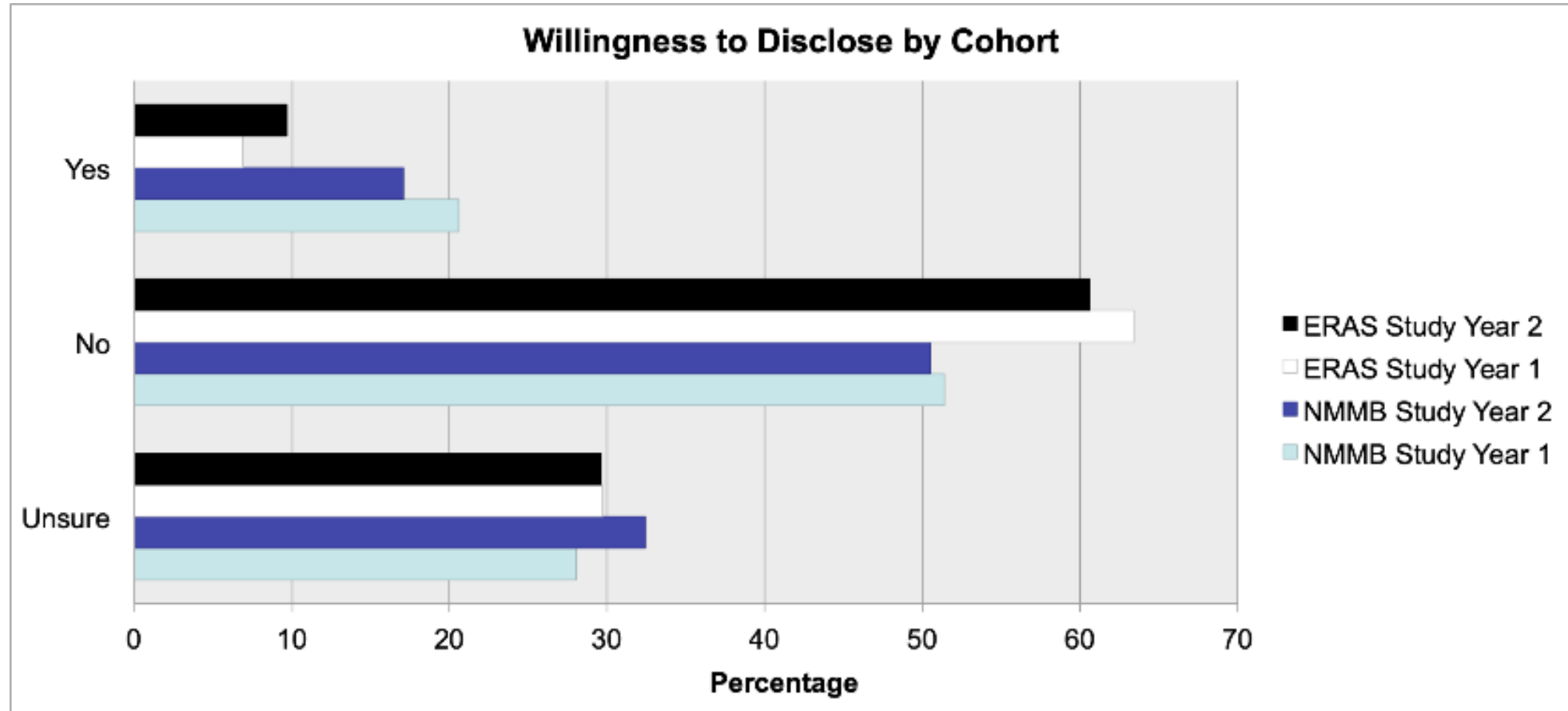
# Results

The average self-perceived mental health of both cohorts was worse in third year students than in first year students (odds ratio of 11.8) (95% CI: 6.09-22.88). There was no significant difference between the two cohorts (P-value= 0.51).





# Results



# Results

---

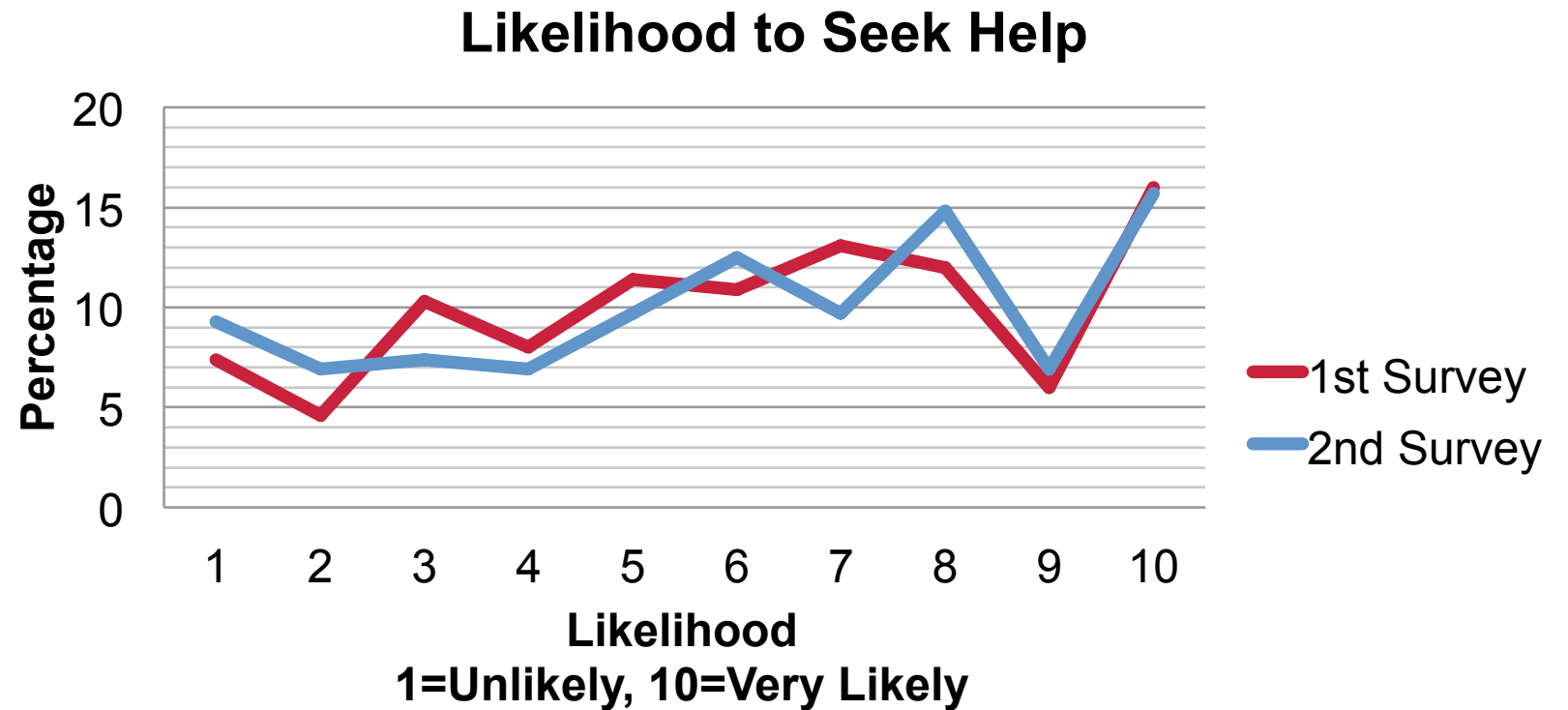
## Top Reasons for Non-disclosure Among Both Cohorts

1. Fear of Stigmatization (67%)
2. Fear of not matching (64%)
3. Wanting to be viewed more competitively on the application (62%)
4. Fear of Repercussions (60%)

# Results

1<sup>st</sup> Survey  
Average= 6.06

2<sup>nd</sup> Survey  
Average = 6.03



# Discussion Points

---

Our findings indicate that medical students commonly perceive themselves to have mental health diagnoses. Our results are similar to the results of other studies. [3-4]

45% of students perceived their mental health worsened since the start of medical school.

Only 8% of students with a presumed mental health condition felt comfortable reporting to ERAS<sup>®</sup>, and only 19% felt comfortable reporting on a licensing application.

# Conclusions

---

Students perceive a decline in their mental health as they progress through medical school.

Students are unlikely to disclose mental health diagnoses on residency applications or state medical board applications.

Common reasons for not disclosing mental health status include fear of stigmatization, desire to be a competitive applicant, fear of repercussions or judgment, and a belief that the diagnosis is not relevant to job performance or ability

# References

---

1. Rotenstein LS. et al. Prevalence of depression, depressive symptoms, and suicidal ideation among medical students: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *JAMA*. 2016;316:2214-2236.
2. Gold KJ et al. “I would never want to have a mental health diagnosis on my record”: a survey of female physicians on mental health diagnosis, treatment, and reporting. *General Hospital Psychiatry*. 2016;43:51–57.
3. Maser B et al. Medical Student Psychological Distress and Mental Illness Relative to the General Population. *Acad Med*. 2019:Aug 20. Epub ahead of print.
4. Dyrbye LN et al. Patterns of distress in US medical students. *Med Teach*. 2011;33:834-839.

# Questions

