

# QUEER-AFFIRMATIVE PRACTICE FOR MEDICAL AND SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS: AN INTRODUCTORY MODULE

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## INTRODUCTION

Research suggests members of the sexual and gender minority (SGM) community fail to seek out medical care despite a higher prevalence of negative health outcomes, ranging from implicit bias to structural violence. In response, the OU-TU School of Community Medicine, the Anne and Henry Zarrow School of Social Work, and the Simulation Center at OU-Tulsa partnered with faculty from the OSU College of Osteopathic Medicine to design and implement a three-part education and training module promoting queer-affirmative, interprofessional practice among medical school and social work students.

## METHODS

All participants (N = 24) completed a standardized pre-post educational assessment, evaluating the development of clinical skills related to SGM populations, the importance of this material to their profession, their comfort working with SGM populations, their confidence in working with SGM populations, and the importance of affirmative practice to their profession. A repeated measures ANOVA analyzed changes over time, both within groups (i.e., all students) and between groups (i.e., medical/social work students).

## MODULE CONTENT

This introductory module consists of three phases: Lecture, Clinical Simulation, and Group Discussion.

The module begins with a lecture-based overview of human sexuality that emphasizes caring for the specific healthcare and social needs of SGM populations.

The initial lecture is followed by a high-fidelity simulation with standardized patient actors (SPs) to implement the practices discussed. To better provide an authentic simulation experience, special attention is taken to recruit SPs who identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community. All patients had the same socioeconomic background, varying only in gender and sexual orientation. The simulation cases begin with a patient presenting with a complaint of anxiety related to their SGM status, requiring medical and social work students to work collaboratively to adequately address patient needs.



Medical student interviews patient with complaint of anxiety. During the interview, student discovers significant social stressors related to patient's sexual minority status. After addressing medical problem, medical student collaborates with social work student to address social-ecological component of anxiety.

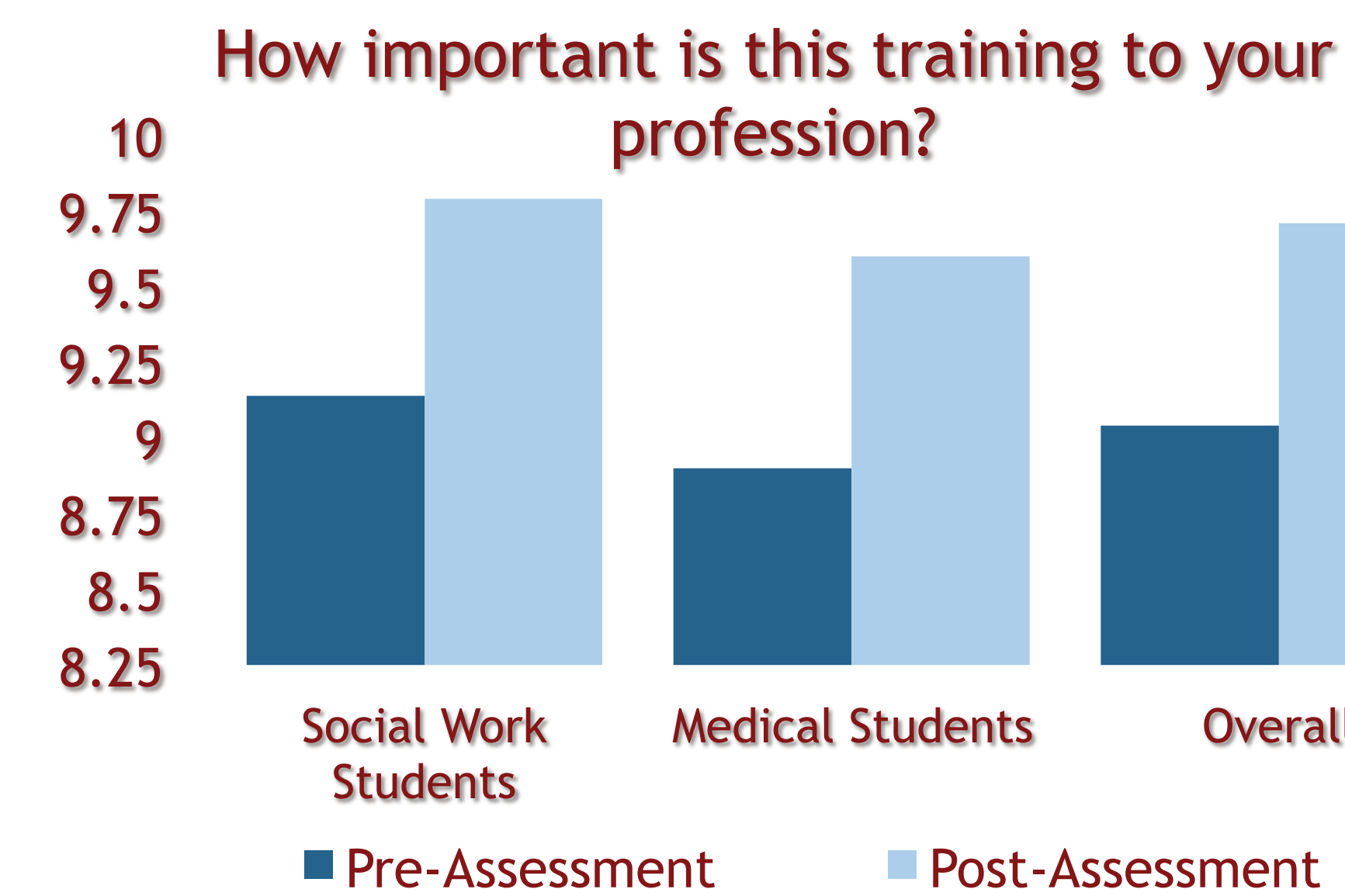


Social Worker addresses sociological needs of the patient, including intersectional factors related to class, gender identity, and economic status. The student implements evidence-based practices such as Motivational Interviewing to facilitate meaningful change talk within the patient.

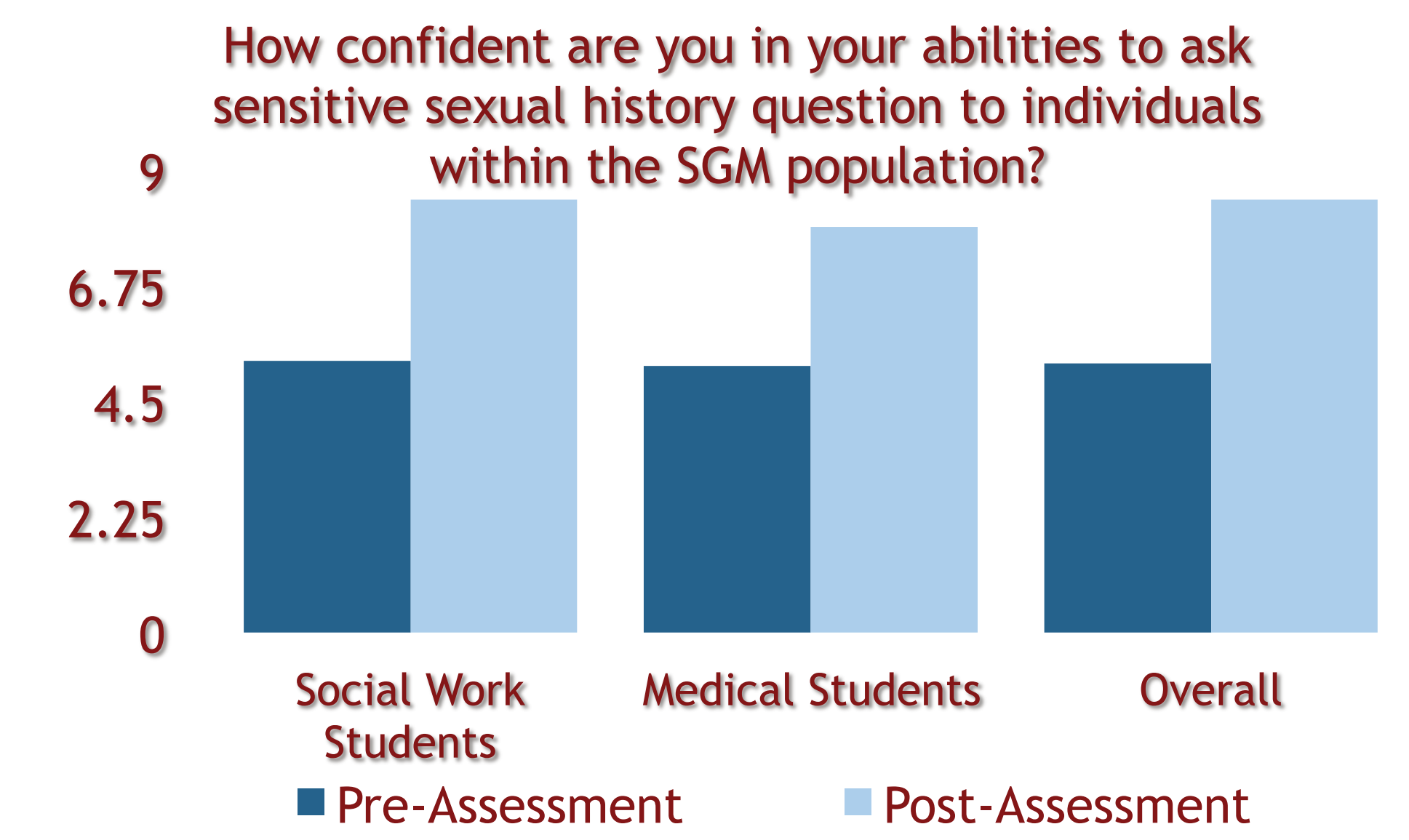
Following the simulation all students engage in a debriefing process—first as pairs with their respective SPs, then as a collective group with all SPs and qualified training facilitators, often faculty members from respective schools.

Skills emphasized throughout the introductory module include interprofessional communication, queer-affirmative practice, expressing empathy, as well as building rapport with patients.

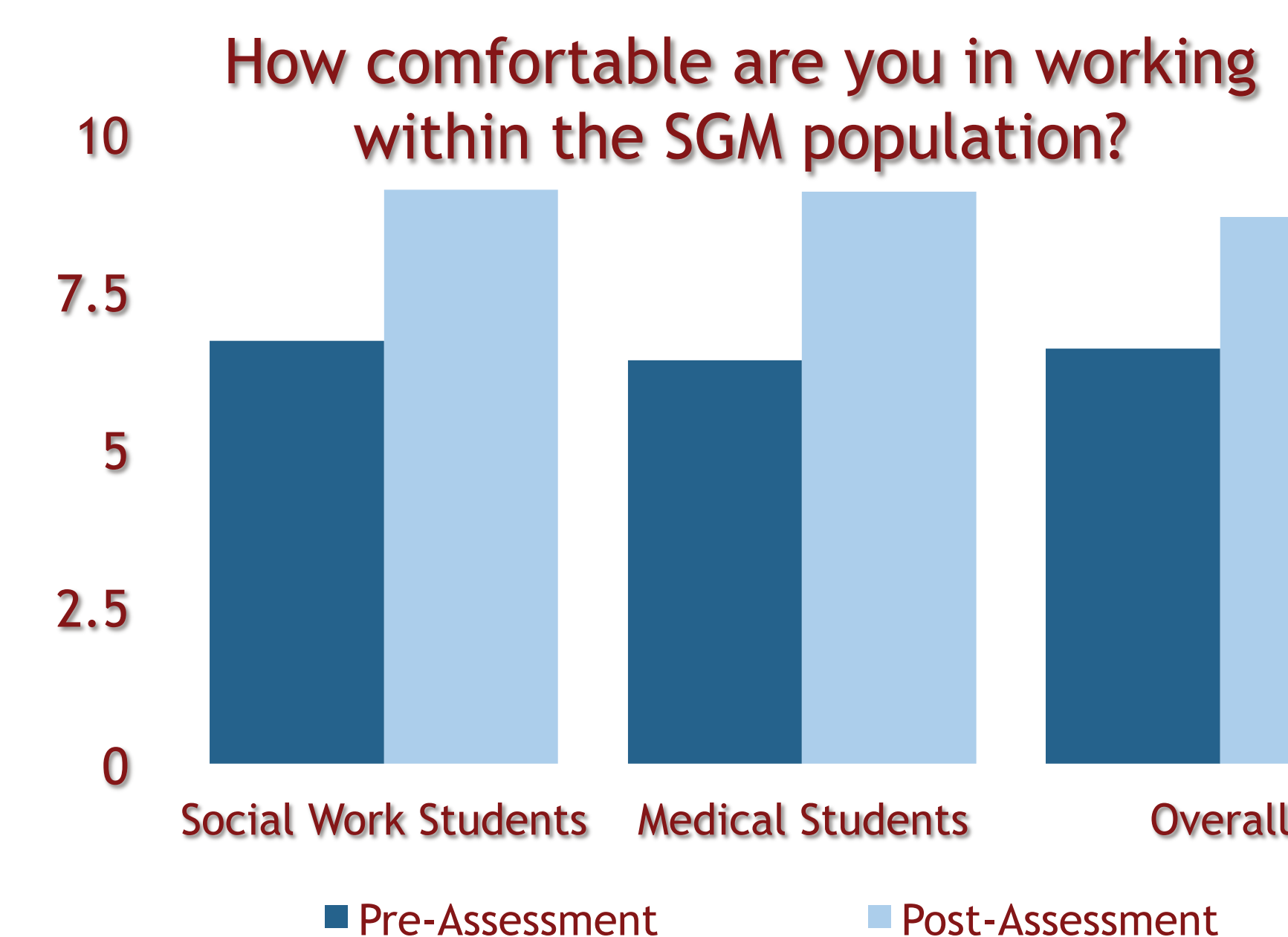
## RESULTS



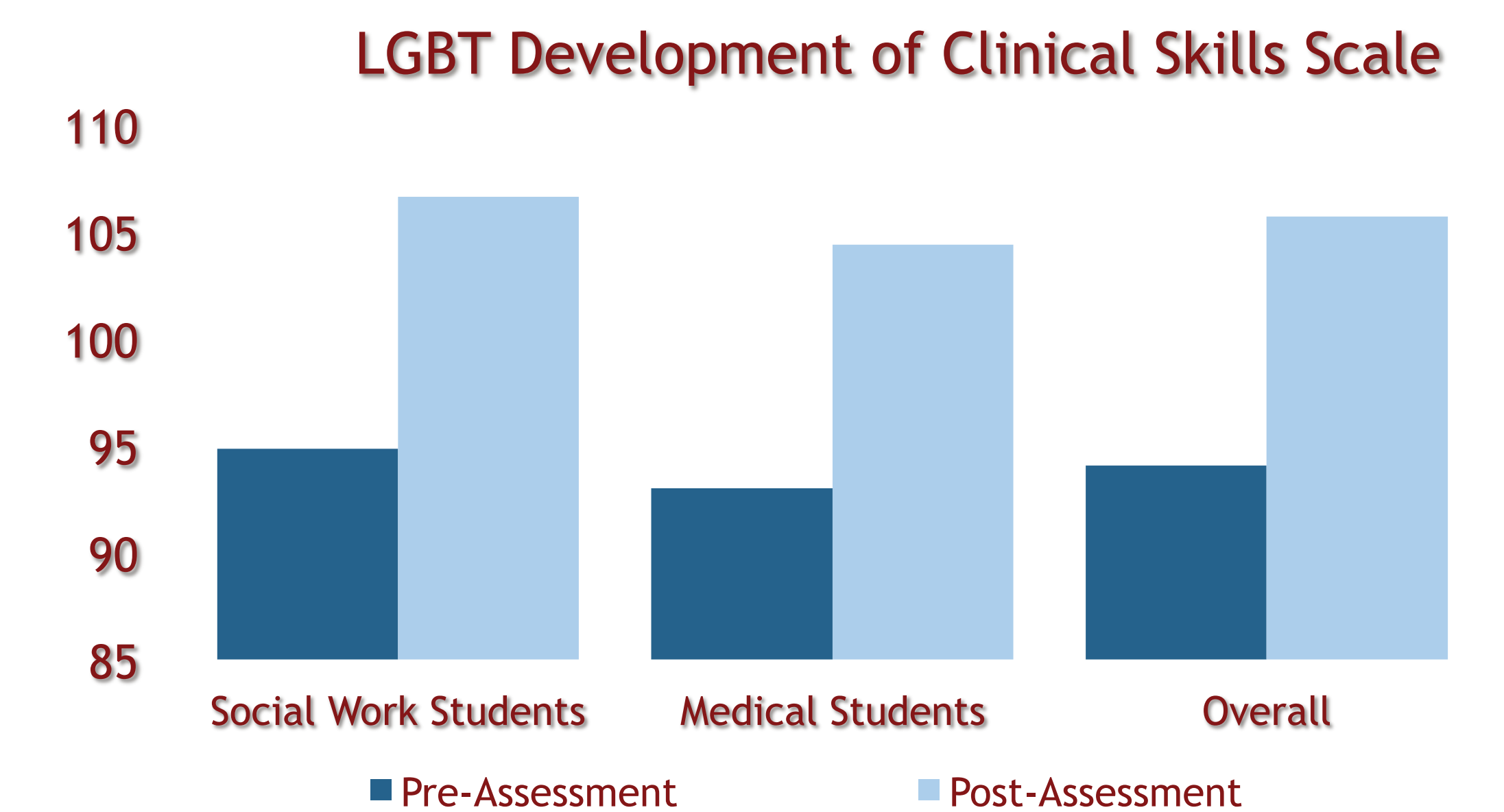
Overall Students were assessed on their views of the importance of this content to their professions. Results demonstrated a statistically significant increase from pre-assessment (M = 9.04, SD = 1.46) to post-assessment (M = 9.71, SD = .690);  $F(1,22) = 5.886, p = .024$ ; with a moderate to large effect size  $\eta^2 p = .211$ .



Students were assessed on their confidence in working within the SGM population. Results of demonstrated a statistically significant increase from pre-assessment (M = 5.25, SD = 2.42) to post-assessment (M = 8.21, SD = 1.25);  $F(1,22) = 37.829, p < .0005$ ; with a large effect size  $\eta^2 p = .632$ .



Students were assessed on their comfort level in working within the SGM population. Results demonstrated a statistically significant increase from pre-assessment (M = 6.58, SD = 2.62) to post-assessment (M = 8.67, SD = 1.31);  $F(1,22) = 16.336, p = .001$ ; with a large effect size  $\eta^2 p = .426$ .



Students were assessed via the LGBT Development of Clinical Skills Scale. Results demonstrated a statistically significant increase from pre-assessment (M = 94.08, SD = 13.23) to post-assessment (M = 105.71, SD = 10.11);  $F(1,22) = 30.843, p < .0005$ ; with a large effect size  $\eta^2 p = .584$ .

Results indicated statistically significant improvements within groups on all measures ( $p < .05$ ) except attitudes (a subscale of the LGBTDOCSS) ( $p = .382$ ) with all significant results having large effect sizes ( $\eta^2 p > .2$ ). Additionally, results indicated no statistically significant difference between groups ( $p > .05$ ).

## CONCLUSIONS

In sum, the results validate the affirmative-practice module as an effective teaching method for students, regardless of discipline. Interdisciplinary education in the form of didactics and high-fidelity simulation can help educate students on how to address the complex issues faced by SGM populations. In addition, both medical and social work students indicate the importance of this training in a post-course opinion survey. Among medical students, 80% suggested the training should be fully integrated as a required training into core curriculum. 100% of medical students indicated the importance of the material and stressed the overall need for more interdisciplinary simulations. Among social work students, 100% indicated satisfaction with the training and agreed with its importance. 50% found the training “thought-provoking and enlightening” and 50% recognized the importance of the interdisciplinary aspect of the training.