

Curriculum Integration of Pregnancy Termination and Family Planning in Didactic Medical Education

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ABSTRACT

Background: Given that one in four women will seek an abortion before age 45, there is an urgent need to demystify abortion-related topics and expand providers' foundational knowledge about pregnancy termination and family planning.¹ An effective way of addressing gaps in women's reproductive healthcare is integration of the public health importance, legal factors, and counseling surrounding family planning and pregnancy termination into medical school curricula in accordance with Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics (APGO) guidelines.²

Objective: Determine whether Indiana University School of Medicine's (IUSM's) current pregnancy termination and family planning curricula follow proposed APGO educational guidelines. Evaluate medical student preparedness and interest surrounding family planning and pregnancy termination.

Methods: To assess the alignment between IUSM and APGO educational guidelines, session learning objectives (SLOs) from the didactic course Endocrine, Reproductive, Musculoskeletal, and Dermatologic Systems (ERMD) syllabus were compared to the relevant APGO objectives. Data was collected through a survey via Qualtrics disseminated to all IUSM students which was intended to assess students' feelings of preparedness providing accurate medical information regarding reproductive health topics, including contraception, abortion, ethical and legal implications of pregnancy termination, personal values clarification, and others, as well as interest in integrating those topics into IUSM curriculum.

Results: Participants (n=303) were primarily female (61.72%) and White (74.43) and included students who had completed the Reproductive Block of the Endocrine, Reproductive, Musculoskeletal, and Dermatologic Systems (ERMD) Course and the OB/GYN Clerkship (35.64%), only the ERMD Course (25.08%), or neither (39.27%). Across all levels of undergraduate medical education, the majority (60.80%) of students expected to learn about family planning and contraception in preclinical or clinical years of medical school. Overall, 85.67% of students believed that IUSM should enhance its reproductive and sexual health coverage in the current curriculum, including expanding family planning and contraception didactic training.

APGO Medical Student Educational Objectives³

Family Planning

1. Describe the mechanism of action and effectiveness of contraceptive methods
2. Counsel the patient regarding the benefits, risks and use for each contraceptive method, including emergency contraception
3. **Discuss barriers to effective contraceptive use and reduction of unintended pregnancy, and how health policy, advocacy and social and environmental factors impact family planning and population health**
4. Describe methods of male and female surgical sterilization
5. Explain the risks, benefits and patient safety implications of female surgical sterilization procedures

Pregnancy Termination

1. **Provide nondirective counseling to patients surrounding pregnancy, including unintended pregnancy**
2. List surgical and non-surgical methods of pregnancy termination
3. Identify potential complications of pregnancy termination
4. **Describe the public health impact of the legal status of abortion and discuss how health policy and advocacy, as well as social and environmental factors, impact access to abortion**

*bolded text indicates no aligned SLOs from 2021 ERMD Canvas Course Modules

RESULTS

Would you be interested in including the following topics in Phase I curriculum?

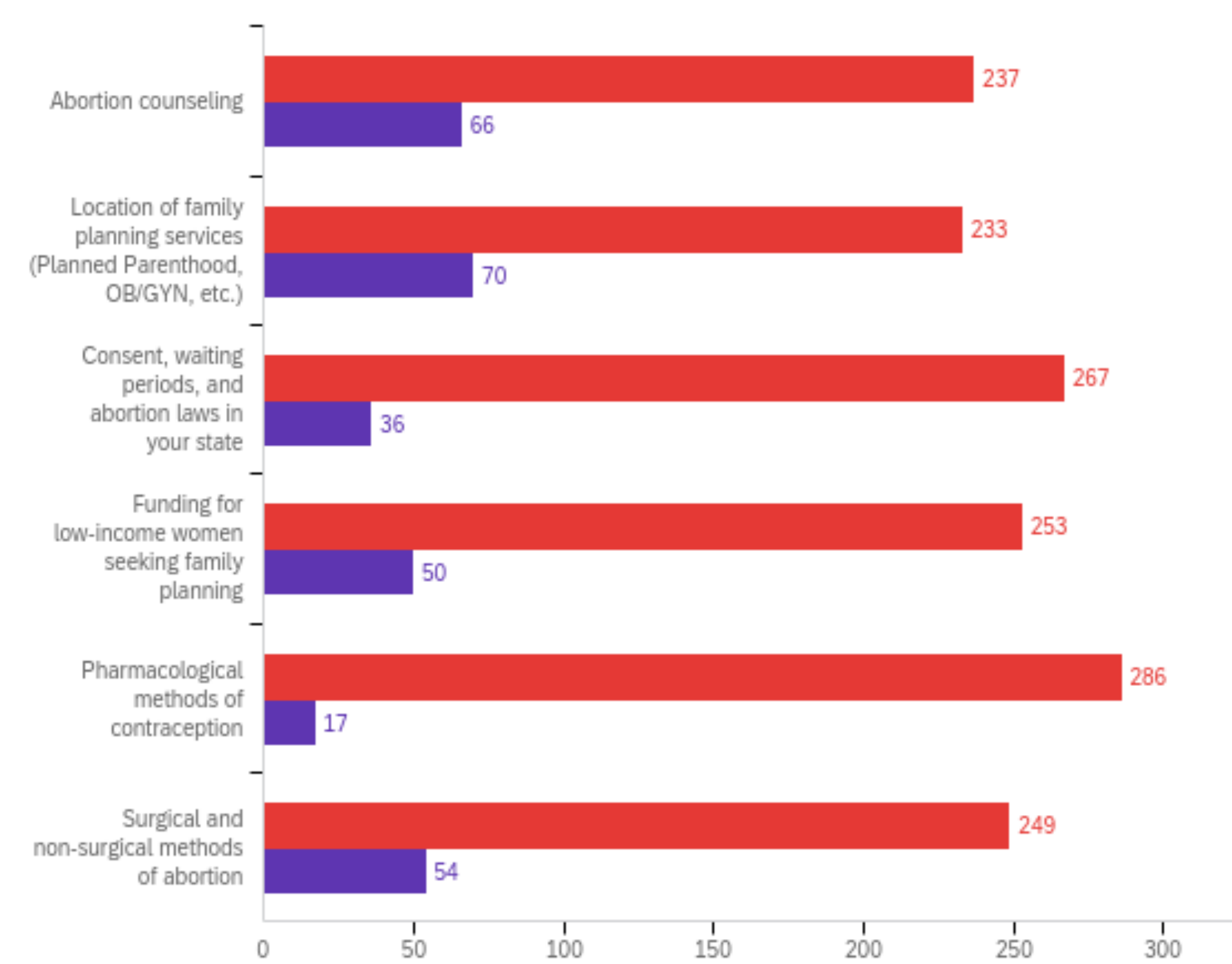


Figure 1. All student survey respondents were shown this question. 303 students answered this question.

Do you feel that these reproductive topics were adequately covered in your Phase I curriculum?

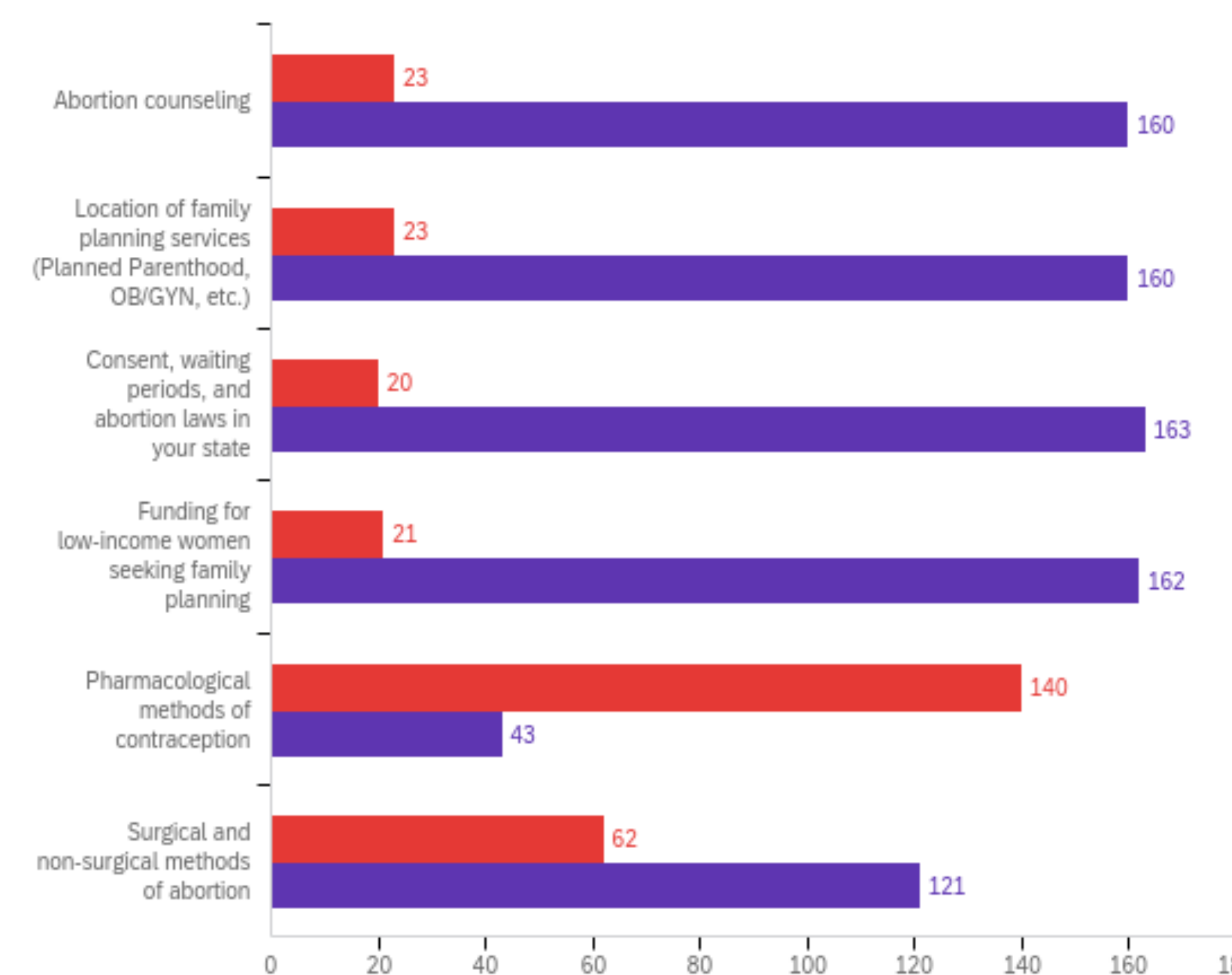


Figure 2. Students who marked "ERMD Only" or "ERMD and OB/GYN clerkship" were shown this question. 183 students answered this question.

Do you feel PREPARED to counsel patients on the following?

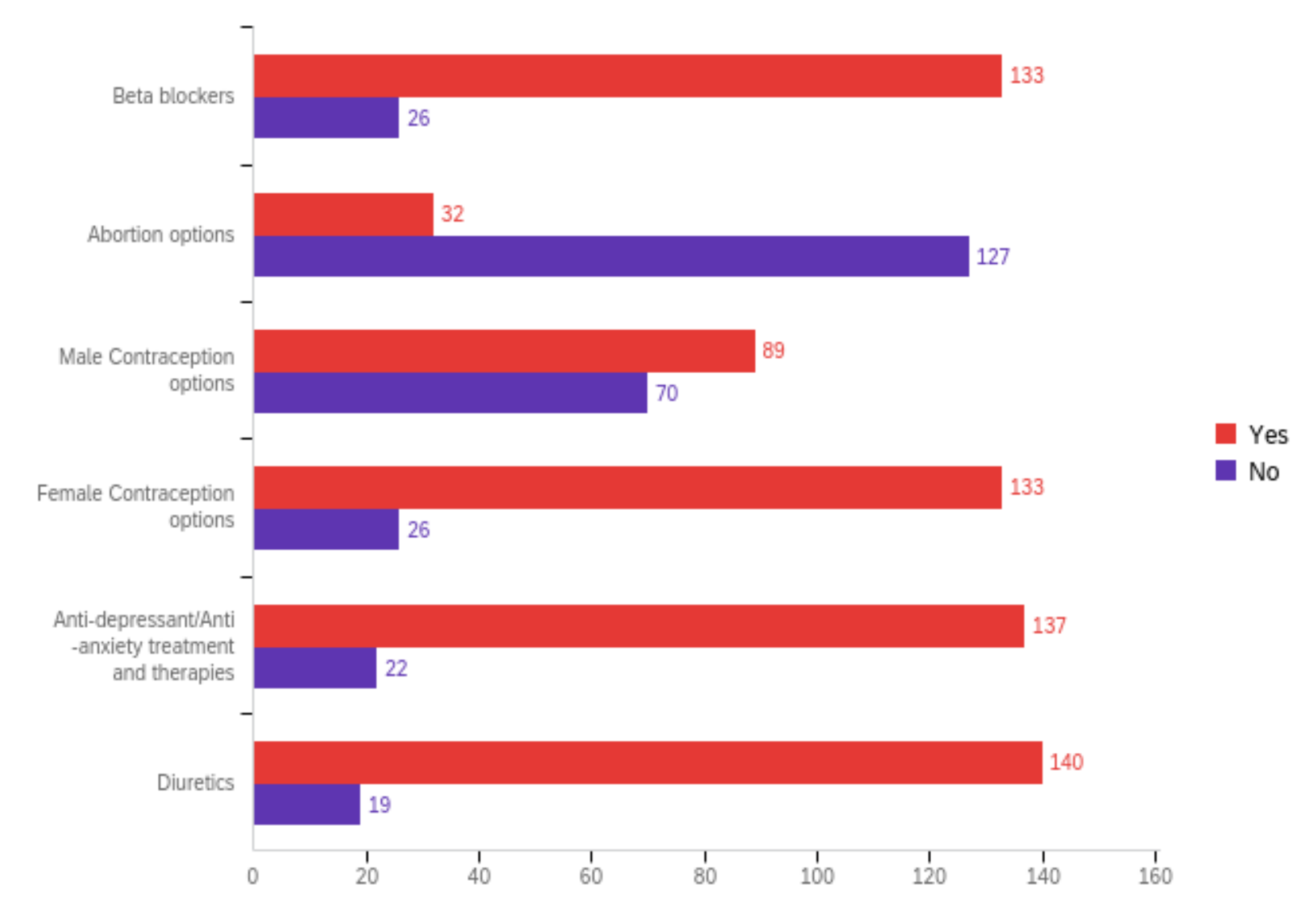


Figure 3. Students who marked "ERMD Only" or "ERMD and OB/GYN clerkship" were shown this question. 183 students answered this question.

Preferred Modality of Instruction for Pregnancy Termination and Family Planning

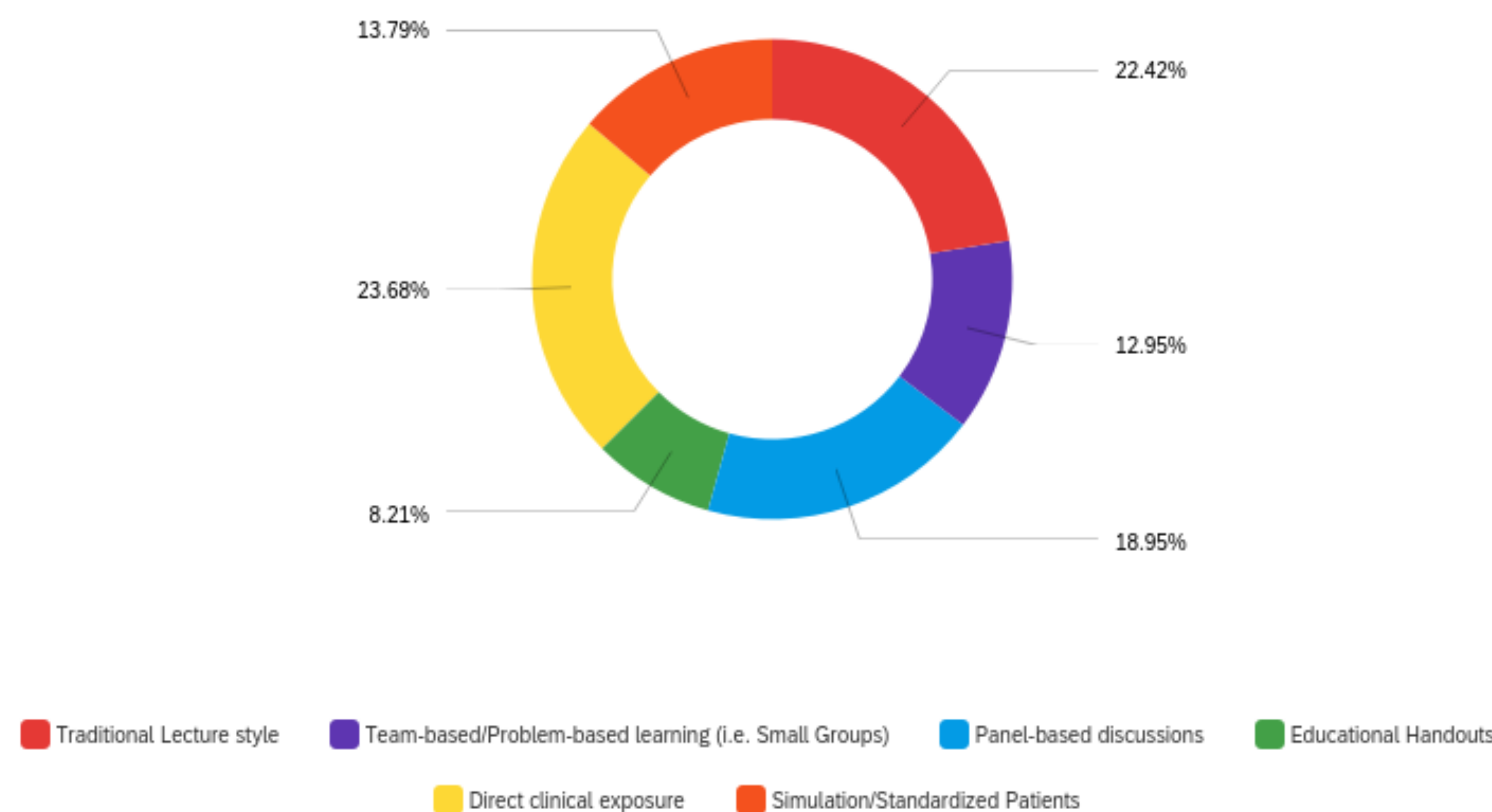


Figure 4. All student survey respondents were shown this question and could select as many options as they deemed appropriate. 303 students answered this question.

DISCUSSION

- We identified potential gaps in the IUSM curriculum where students expressed a **high level of interest** with a **low level of preparedness** regarding abortion options counseling, even among advanced-year students. Considering the high percentage of students who expect to learn about foundational topics of pregnancy termination and family planning in their clinical and preclinical medical school years, this expectation is not being met under the current Phase I curriculum.
- Although most techniques, methods and complications are to be covered in clerkship settings, nondirective counseling and public health impact of the legal status of abortion and contraceptive use are topics that can and should be integrated into didactic courses.
- Several universities have accomplished this by using **Team-Based Learning/Problem-Based Learning (TBL/PBL)** forum to encourage open, non-judgmental discussions among students.⁴
- **Patient panels** have been shown to be one of the most effective methods at humanizing illnesses and diseases, as well as exposing medical students to real-life consequences of the social determinants of health, particularly sexual and reproductive health.⁵
- Both modalities were popular among our survey participants.

REFERENCES

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