

Titles: Building More Inclusive and Psychologically Safe Spaces in Dental Education

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Purpose: Creating educational environments that are psychologically safe allows students to perform better academically. In turn, individuals in a psychologically safe environment are more likely to exhibit effective communication toward each other and their patients, thereby reducing medical errors. Patients, students, and employees are increasingly diverse at dental schools, and yet schools continue to struggle to make the environment more inclusive and psychologically safe for these individuals who can be the target of microaggressions and overt bias. This study examines the impact of a one-day interactive workshop on students' understanding of creating inclusive environments for each other and their patients.

Methods: After the workshop, students were invited to complete an anonymous, online survey rating the impact. The survey had six items with a 5-point Likert scale and four open-ended questions. In total, 71 students participated in the workshop; 48 gave informed consent and completed the survey. This study has IRB Approval, IRB2022-004.

Key Findings: Sixty-nine percent of participants rated their learning experience as positive, 17% rated it as neutral, and 14% rated it as negative. The majority (72%) of participants said that at the conclusion of the session they understood diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) much better than they did at the beginning of the session. One theme discovered in the free-text responses was that students, regardless of how they rated the session, reported that having the opportunity to share experiences and listen to their peers speak was powerful and important.

Conclusion: Most respondents felt that attending this workshop increased their understanding of creating an environment of belonging. In today's polarized society, where federal, state, and local governments, as well as university donors, have strong views related to DEIB, it is important to create space for dialogue among community members to create psychologically safe environments.