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## Assessing the Value of an Expanded Clinical Genetics Curriculum for Medical Students

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# Assessing the Value of an Expanded Clinical Genetics Curriculum for Medical Students



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# Background

- Genetics curriculum in the pre-clinical years.
- Rapid changes in genetic technology.
- The ethical, legal, and social consequences of providing this new technology must be addressed.
- UMass attempt: incorporate the potential impact of the expanding genetic technology into first and third year medical school curriculum.



# Curriculum Intervention

- An expanded genetics curriculum with an enhanced clinical focus for *first year medical students* was started in 1995.
- The addition includes:
  - Patient and family interviews,
  - Small group discussions,
  - Psychosocial and ethical case presentations,
  - Role play, and letter-writing exercises to families with hereditary cancer syndromes.



# Curriculum Intervention (Cont.)

- In 2000, a complementary program, was added as a two-day interclerkship.
- The program was attended by approximately 50-60% of the third year students.



# Curriculum Intervention (Cont.)

- The interclerkship includes:
  - Students lectures and panel discussions on genetic technology.
  - Dramatic simulations on the impact of genetic technology on society.
  - Small group interviews of patients and families.
  - Small group case discussions emphasizing ethical dilemmas in genetics.
  - Field trip to biotechnology company.



# Purpose of the Study

- To evaluate students' responses to the expanded clinical genetics curriculum.



## Method

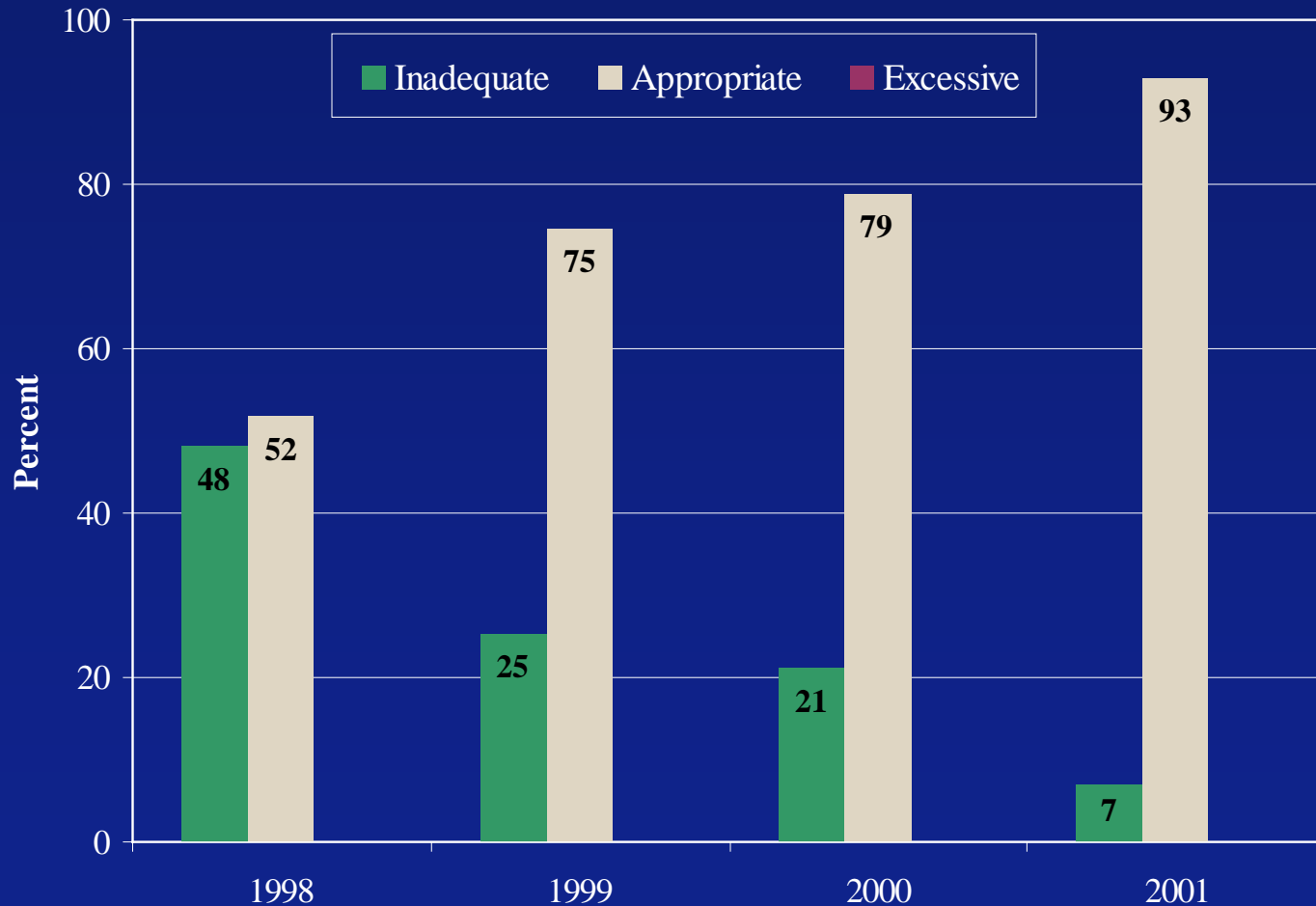
- Ratings of the amount of genetics instruction time, as reported in the AAMC graduation questionnaire (GQ), were compiled.
- Data across four consecutive graduating classes of medical students were obtained.
- Proportions of “appropriate” ratings of the four cohorts were compared.
- The results were also compared to the





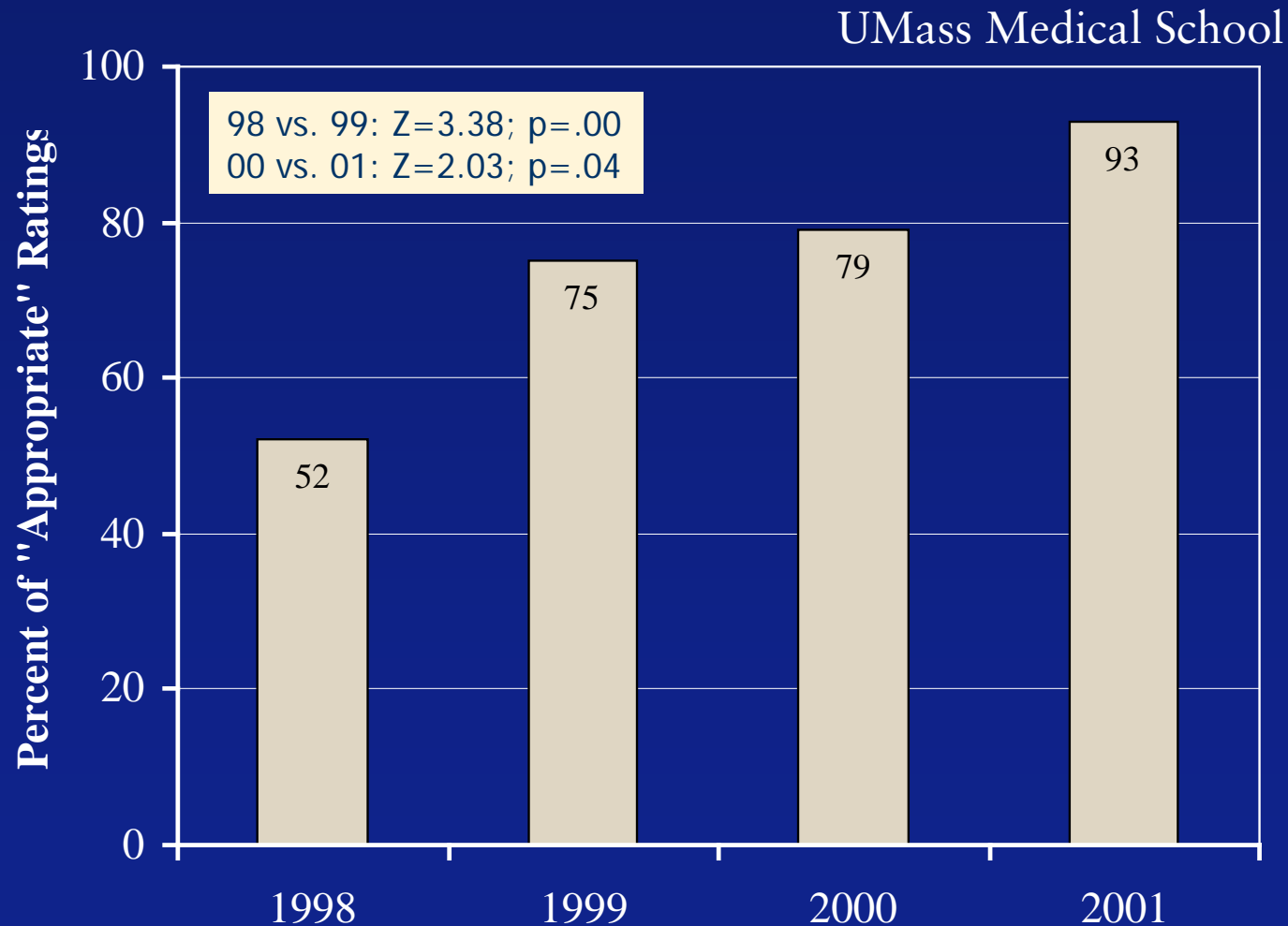
# Ratings of Instruction Time in Genetic Counseling

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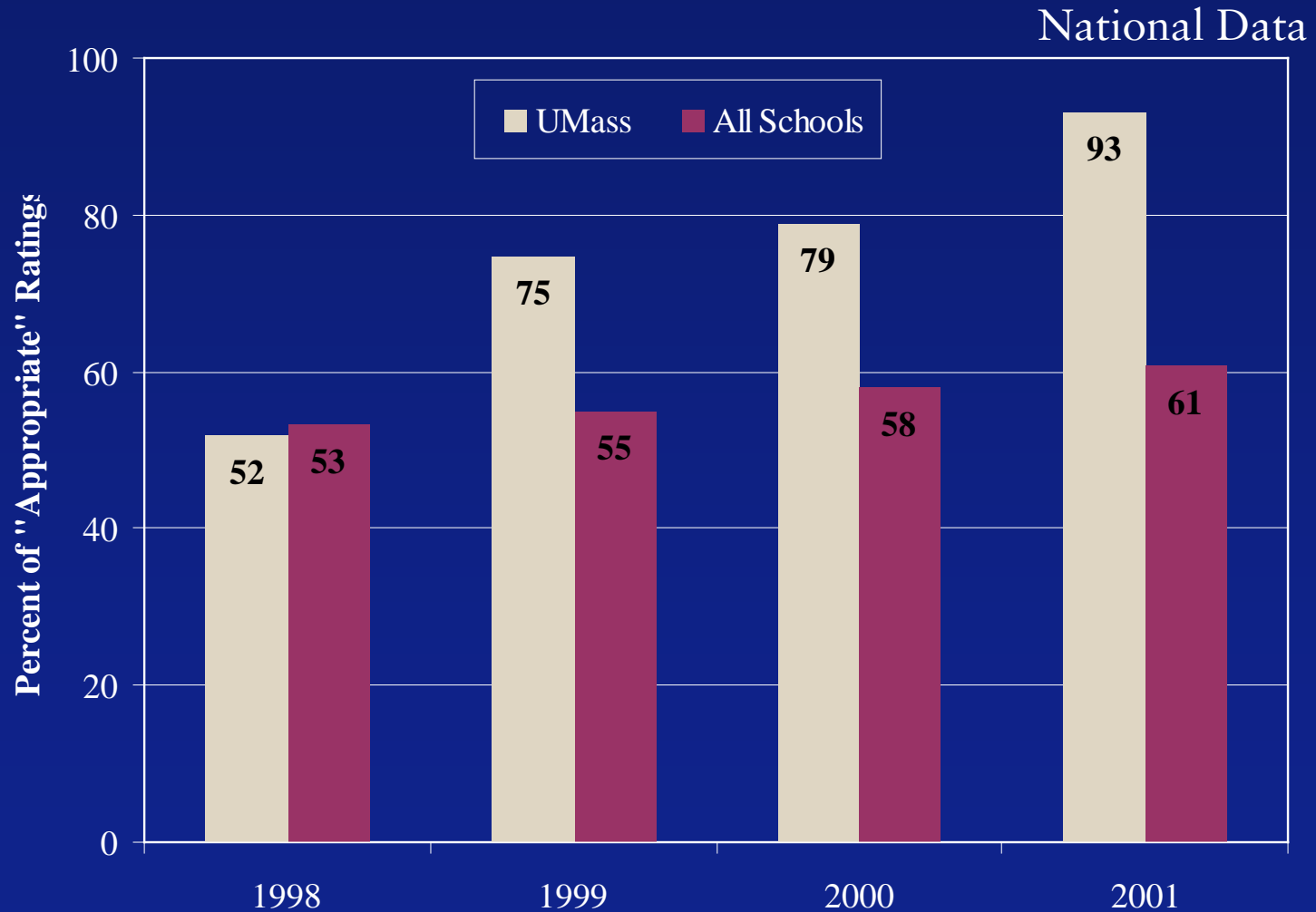


# Ratings of Instruction Time in Genetic Counseling





# Ratings of Instruction Time in Genetic Counseling





# Conclusions

- There is evidence of the importance of a clinical emphasis early on in the genetics curriculum, followed by a 3rd year refresher program.
- Such “longitudinal” curricular interventions can be successful in promoting an enhanced educational experience.