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Peer Health Coach Training Practicum: Evidence from a Flipped Classroom

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Abstract

Health coaching is a popular and effective method to assist individuals in gaining motivation to engage in healthy lifestyle behavior changes. The utility has led to an increased demand for trained individuals within the health care field. A new flipped classroom practicum course was developed to offer undergraduate students the opportunity to learn a foundational skill called motivational interviewing (MI) commonly used in health coaching. The 16-week, 2-credit course (led by three trained, graduate student health coaches) consists of online video lectures, in-class activities, experiential training, and supervised practicum experiences in health coaching. The aim of this study is to evaluate the process, impact, and outcomes of this new health coaching practicum. Measures consisted of surveys to assess participant satisfaction and course impact using 6-point Likert scales and were analyzed descriptively (mean \pm SD), along with obtaining recorded MI conversations to evaluate fidelity of the training. These preliminary results support the utility of a flipped classroom practicum course designed to teach undergraduate students the skills of MI; however, extended practice with the use of MI may be needed for students to meet all proficiency levels.

Disciplines

Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research | Educational Methods

PEER HEALTH COACH TRAINING PRACTICUM: EVIDENCE FROM A FLIPPED CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Health coaching is a popular and effective method to assist individuals in gaining motivation to engage in healthy lifestyle behavior changes. The utility has led to an increased demand for trained individuals within the health care field. A new flipped classroom practicum course was developed to offer undergraduate students the opportunity to learn a foundational skill called motivational interviewing (MI) commonly used in health coaching. The 16-week, 2-credit course (led by three trained, graduate student health coaches) consists of online video lectures, in-class activities, experiential training, and supervised practicum experiences in health coaching. The aim of this study is to evaluate the process, impact, and outcomes of this new health coaching practicum. Measures consisted of surveys to assess participant satisfaction and course impact using 6-point Likert scales and were analyzed descriptively (mean \pm SD), along with obtaining recorded MI conversations to evaluate fidelity of the training. These preliminary results support the utility of a flipped classroom practicum course designed to teach undergraduate students the skills of MI; however, extended practice with the use of MI may be needed for students to meet all proficiency levels.

BACKGROUND

Health coaching is widely used in worksite, commercial and clinical applications to help individuals adopt and sustain healthy lifestyles. The popularity of health coaching has led to an increased demand for individuals that can effectively provide this service to clients in different settings and contexts. Thus, there is a need for academic programs and coursework to provide this training. A new flipped classroom practicum course was developed to offer undergraduate students the opportunity to learn the important skill of motivational interviewing (MI) commonly used in health coaching. The 16-week, 2-credit course (led by three trained, graduate student health coaches) consists of online video lectures, in-class activities, experiential training, and supervised practicum experiences in health coaching, similar to and based on previously published training protocols (Hohman, Pierce, & Barnett, 2015; White, Gazewood, & Mounsey, 2007). The aim of this study is to evaluate the process, impact, and outcomes of this new health coaching practicum.

METHODS

A sample of 20 students enrolled in the practicum course consented to participate in the evaluation (13 female; average age 21.2 ± 1.5) and 15 consented to provide a recorded MI conversation to evaluate fidelity of the training. Surveys assessed participant satisfaction and impact using 6-point Likert scales and were analyzed descriptively (mean \pm SD). Recordings of participant MI conversations were independently coded by three trained instructors using the Motivational Interviewing Treatment Integrity (MITI) Coding Manual 4.2.1 (T. B. Moyers, Manuel, & Ernst, 2015; Theresa B. Moyers, Rowell, Manuel, Ernst, & Houck, 2016).

RESULTS

Survey results demonstrated that students felt comfortable (5.0 ± 0.6) and confident (4.6 ± 0.5) using MI. Students reported that they found the course useful, (5.6 ± 0.5) and would most likely continue to utilize this skill in the future (5.6 ± 0.7). Inter-rater agreement for MI fidelity showed

high reliability between coders (95% agreement, $p < 0.001$) with average scores being reported. Table 1 shows results from the MITI coding of recorded MI conversations reporting 12 of the 15 students meeting the “fair” proficiency level for relational components of MI (80%), 4 of the 15 students reached the “fair” proficiency level for technical components of MI (27%). None of the participants reached proficiency levels for the ratio of reflections to questions used.

Table 1. Average \pm SD MITI 4.2.1. coding scores (n=15).

	Score (mean \pm SD)	“Fair” Proficiency Level	% Meeting “Fair” Proficiency
Technical	3.24 \pm 0.51	3.5	27%
Relational	3.57 \pm 0.62	3	80%
% Complex Reflections	0.37 \pm 0.15	0.4	47%
Reflections to Questions	0.44 \pm 0.20	1	0%
Total MI Adherence	2.53 \pm 1.4		
Total MI Non-Adherence	0.29 \pm 0.53		

DISCUSSION

Students completing the practicum course were skilled in relational components of MI which consist of partnership and empathy toward their client, but needed additional practice with technical components which consist of cultivating change talk and softening sustain talk through utilizing simple and complex reflections. These preliminary results support the utility of a flipped classroom practicum course designed to teach undergraduate students the skills of MI. However extended practice with the use of MI and technical component refinement may be needed for students to meet proficiency levels.

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