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The Current State of Diagnostic Error Education in US Medical Schools

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Introduction

- Diagnostic error has been defined by the Institute of Medicine as a major cause of patient harm
- Despite this, little is known about how medical schools are educating future physicians on diagnostic error
- We sought to elucidate details on diagnostic error education at US medical schools

- **Aim I:** Develop a survey that will assess the degree to which diagnostic error is taught in US medical schools, including specifics about the curricula
- **Aim II:** Develop awareness of the benefits of implementing diagnostic error education in US medical schools

Methods

- We conducted an anonymous survey that was distributed through a listserv in February 2021 to deans of medical education at US MD and DO medical schools utilizing Qualtrics
- The study was sent two more times to improve response rate

Survey

- Medical schools were asked whether or not they taught diagnostic error
- Follow up questions asked for details of the curriculum if taught at that school, or reasons for not teaching if not taught at that school

Results

- There were 47 responses out of a possible 192 deans of medical education
- 83.7% of schools teach diagnostic error, while 16.3% do not
- 68.0% of schools teach diagnostic error during both preclinical and clinical years, 28.0% teach it during only the preclinical years, and 4.0% teach during only the clinical years
- Formats for teaching include small-group discussions (87.5%), didactic lectures (79.2%), online modules (41.7%), workshops (33.3%), simulation (33.3%), and flipped classroom (29.2%)

Conclusion

- To our knowledge, this is the first study investigating diagnostic error education in US medical schools
- The results suggest that the majority of US medical schools do teach diagnostic error in their curriculum
- It is more commonly taught during preclinical years, and small-group discussions were the most common method

Future Research

- Future studies should investigate the effects of diagnostic error education in medical school on patient outcomes