

Expanding Medical Student Sexual Health Education through a Student-Led Extracurricular Group

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Introduction

Despite a clear need to educate future practitioners in sexual health, research has found that little time is devoted to the subject in North American medical schools. Furthermore, few studies have examined novel ways to implement sexual health training in medical education.

Aims

- To describe a student-led extracurricular group created at Wake Forest School of Medicine to promote interest in sexual health assessment and STI testing during the preclinical years of medical education
- To provide evidence for an engaging model of sexual health education that could be incorporated into other medical schools' curricula
- To demonstrate that sexual health education coupled with clinical opportunities to apply learned skills can also benefit the community

Methods

Wake Forest University Sexual Health Awareness Group (SHAG) was formed in 2011 by two medical students through partnership with the Forsyth County Department of Health (FCDPH). The group facilitated annual medical student training sessions focused on sexual history taking, behavioral risk assessment, and appropriate STI screening. Trained students conducted sexual health counseling and STI screenings at community sites alongside FCDPH employees. Sites at which students volunteered included three local universities, a LGBTQ Pride event, and an annual community health fair. STI tests performed included serum sampling for syphilis, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and hepatitis C (HCV), patient-administered genital sampling for *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* (GC) and *Chlamydia trachomatis* (CT), and urine sampling for GC/CT. Volunteer-collected pharyngeal tests and patient-collected rectal tests for GC/CT were added in 2014.

Results

Twenty-five students were trained in 2011. The number of students trained increased annually, with 89 medical students trained in 2016. Trainees included students in the MD, MD/PhD, PA, and MBS programs. Of the students trained in 2015, 64.7% volunteered at least once between September 2015 and March 2016 (44/68). There were 57 opportunities to volunteer at local sites during this period.

Table 1. Demographics of Student Participants

Academic Year	Number of Students Trained	% Pre-clinical Medical Students	% Male
2012	30	87%	43%
2013	35	91%	46%
2014	66	98%	32%
2015	68	100%	37%
2016	89	89%	42%

At University #1, serum HIV/syphilis testing increased by 49% with SHAG involvement and over 200 serum HIV/syphilis tests were performed annually by SHAG at University #2. Between August 2014 and October 2015, 207 GC/CT tests were performed at University #1 (131 urine/vaginal, 53 pharyngeal, 23 rectal) and 257 GC/CT test were performed at University #3 (203 urine/vaginal, 50 pharyngeal, 4 rectal). During this same period 10 HCV tests were performed at University #1 and 22 were performed at University #3. At University #2, 531 GC/CT tests (455 urine/vaginal, 65 pharyngeal, 11 rectal) were performed between September 2013 and September 2015.

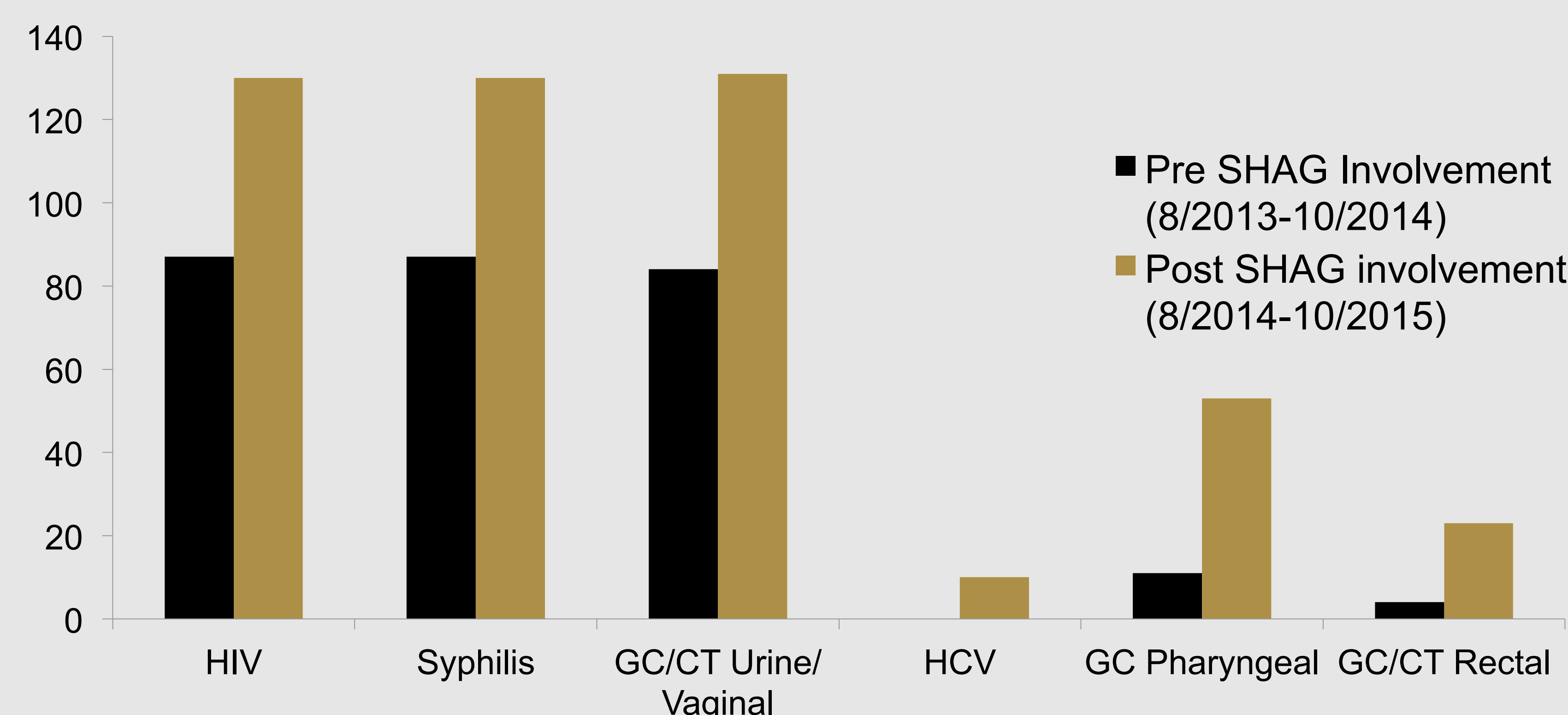


Figure 1. Annual Testing Pre- and Post-SHAG Involvement at University #1

Conclusions

This student-led extracurricular group in partnership with FCDPH provided experiential sexual health training while augmenting FCDPH's testing capacity. Growing participation in trainings demonstrates medical students' desire to learn more about sexual health during preclinical years and supports this model as an effective mechanism of introducing students to the topic.



Student volunteers at an annual STI testing event

References

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