### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to enhance the PA didactic behavioral medicine course by incorporating clinical psychology students as standardized patients (SP), and assess the effectiveness of this on students’ perceived ability to perform psychiatric evaluations.

### Methods

During the first half of the course, PA students were instructed on psychiatric history taking and the mental status examination (MSE), and given the opportunity to practice on each other.

During the second half of the course, a clinical psychologist and 4 clinical psychology PhD students acted as SPs and role-played patients presenting with:

- Bipolar disorder in acute mania
- Acute psychotic disorder
- Major depressive disorder with suicidal ideation

A checklist-style rubric was used to evaluate the students, but not to assign a formal grade. Following the standardized patient examinations (SPE), the SPs provided formative feedback, addressing students’ adherence to the following:

- Maintain eye contact
- Conduct an organized interview
- Include all elements of the history and MSE
- Validate the patient’s perceptions and feelings
- Display empathy
- Interact with the patient in a respectful, non-judgmental manner

PA students were given a voluntary, anonymous 5-point Likert scale survey (strongly disagree to strongly agree) regarding their perceived improvement of: psychiatric history taking; MSE; knowledge of psychiatric patients’ clinical presentations; and confidence levels entering their behavioral health rotations.

### Results

Sixty out of 61 PA students completed the survey. Students perceived improvement in their psychiatric history taking, MSE, and knowledge of psychiatric patients’ clinical presentations. Confidence levels entering their behavioral health rotations also increased.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This exercise improved my psychiatric history taking skills.</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This exercise improved my mental status examination skills.</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0.52</td>
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<tr>
<td>This exercise improved my knowledge of the clinical presentations of psychiatric patients.</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel more confident entering into my behavioral health rotation because of this exercise.</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>0.33</td>
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Table 1: Likert 5-point Scale Post-SPE Survey of PA Students

### Discussion

PA students perceived improvement in psychiatric history taking, MSE, knowledge of psychiatric patients’ clinical presentations, and confidence entering their behavioral health rotations as a result of this interdisciplinary exercise.

As one limitation of this study is the lack of pre-intervention assessment, we will improve upon this by including pre- and post-intervention surveys for PA and clinical psychology students next year.

### References


