

Background

- Students may be unsure as to which specialty they wish to pursue upon entering medical school.
- Learning Communities (LC) provides students with a mentor to guide them throughout medical school, but many students may not have the opportunity to interact with different mentors in other specialties.

Program Description

- We created a curricular event to help preclinical students gain exposure to various areas of medicine and introduce them to mentors in fields of interest.
- LC mentors and other physicians were recruited from 18 different specialties and assigned to lead short, 10-minute conversations with groups of 6-7 students, guided by student-curated objectives.

Table 1: Objectives for Career Explorations Forum

Objective	Description
Help	Students gain exposure and harvest interest in specialties they may not otherwise encounter.
Teach	Students about how aspects such as patient population, technology and life-work balance vary between specialties but also from doctor to doctor.
Inspire	Students by introducing them to faculty members who share their personal journeys, thereby demonstrating how variable the journey to a specialty can be.
Initiate	Conversation on how to be a strong applicant to various specialties, informing students on the steps they can be taking as a first or second year student.
Create	Networking opportunities between students and faculty, fostering mentorship relationships, and possible research projects.

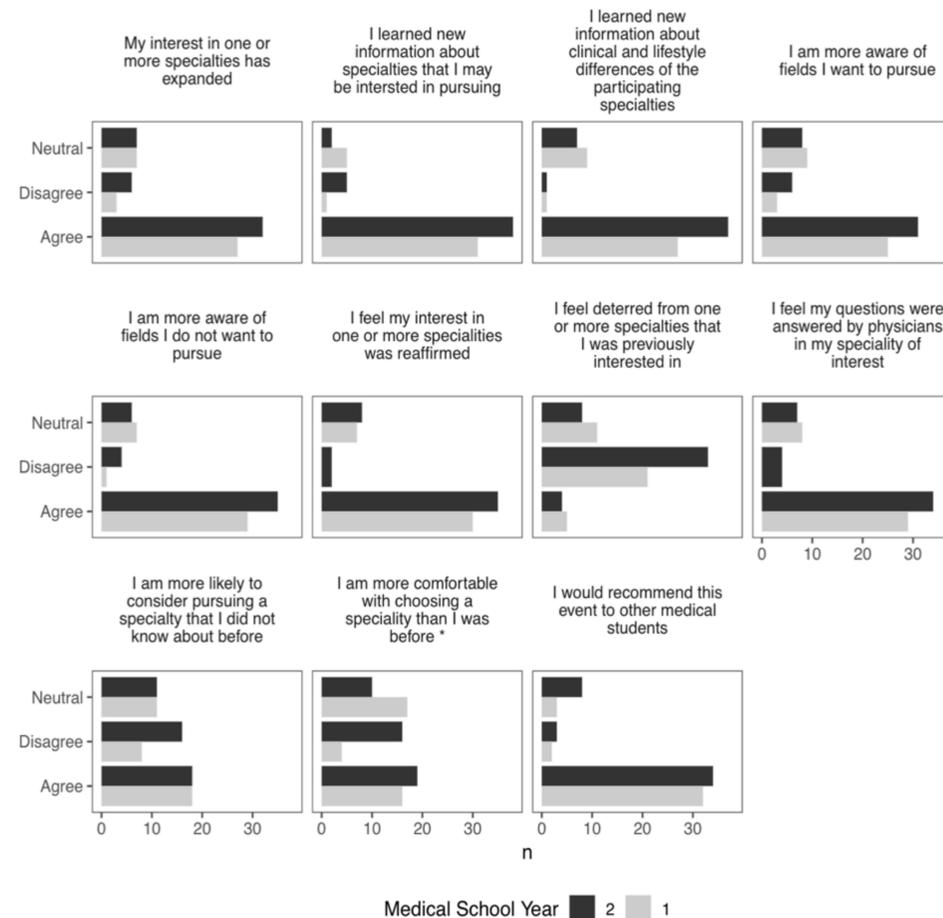
Program Evaluation

- Students were administered an optional survey after the event. Results of both first- and second-year medical students (N=82) are presented in Table 2.
- Responses of First-year medical students only (N=37) and second-year medical students only (N=45) are shown in Figure 1.

Table 2: Survey Questions and Responses

Question	Agree n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Neutral n(%)
My interest in one or more specialties has expanded	59 (72)	9 (11)	14 (17.1)
I learned new information about specialties that I may be interested in pursuing	69 (84.1)	6 (7.3)	7 (8.5)
I learned new information about clinical and lifestyle differences of the participating specialties	64 (78)	2 (2.4)	16 (19.5)
I am more aware of fields I want to pursue	56 (68.3)	9 (11)	17 (20.7)
I am more aware of fields I do not want to pursue	64 (78)	5 (6.1)	13 (15.9)
I feel my interest in one or more specialties was reaffirmed	65 (79.3)	2 (2.4)	15 (18.3)
I feel deterred from one or more specialties that I was previously interested in	9 (11)	54 (65.9)	19 (23.2)
I feel my questions were answered by physicians in my specialty of interest	63 (76.8)	4 (4.9)	15 (18.3)
I am more likely to consider pursuing a specialty that I did not know about before	36 (43.9)	24 (29.3)	22 (26.8)
I am more comfortable with choosing a specialty than I was before	35 (42.7)	20 (24.4)	27 (32.9)
I would recommend this event to other medical students	66 (80.5)	5 (6.1)	11 (13.4)

Figure 1. Survey Response by Year of Medical School



Discussion

- Survey responses indicated a positive response.
- Exposing students early in medical school to potential fields of interest could offer advantages, including an opportunity to initiate impactful mentorships.
- Mentorship can inspire medical students with a role model, help them discover which specialty suits them best, or simply assist them in creating a competitive residency application.

Conclusion

- The event was successful and well-received by students.

Next steps include:

- Establishing a “Career Explorations” event as part of the LC curriculum.
- Continuing to emphasize the importance of mentorship in medical education and further exploring the continuity and impact of relationships formed.

Acknowledgments

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