Research Letter

Assessing the impact of an intervention to increase minority representation in dermatology

Dear Editor,

There have been several impactful calls to action for increased diversity in dermatology. One study demonstrated that a longitudinal dermatology-focused mentorship program at the high school level improves interest in pursuing a career in dermatology (Kwatra et al., 2017). These findings are encouraging, but they cannot be extrapolated to the undergraduate level or single-occurrence events. We explored the potential of a singular conference-style event to increase undergraduate students’ knowledge about dermatology and attitude toward the field.

We hosted an event called “Introduction to Dermatology” to provide premedical students at the University of Pennsylvania with early exposure to the procedural and medical aspects of dermatology. Students who are underrepresented in medicine (UIM) were eligible to attend. Recruitment was in partnership with the university chapter of the Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students via distribution of digital and physical flyers and online publicity. The workshop was hosted by UIM medical students, residents, and an attending. We implemented a 2-hour curriculum modeled after the strengths of similar efforts (Kwatra et al., 2017) that included lectures on core dermatology concepts and a suturing session (Table 1). Attendees voluntarily completed an anonymous survey to assess the intervention’s efficacy.

Of the 15 attendees, 12 completed surveys, with 10 identifying as Black and 2 as Hispanic (Table 2). Prior to the session, 25% indicated an interest in a career in dermatology, and 66% indicated they could find mentorship in dermatology. Afterward, 75% of respondents expressed an interest in a career in dermatology, and 100% indicated dermatology was a field in which they could find mentorship. Pre- and postmeasures of interest in the field were calculated using a 2-tailed t test, and the increase in interest was statistically significant (p = .02). The students most enjoyed interactions with mentors.

At the 2017 American Academy of Dermatology President’s Conference, three main aims were established to increase the number of practicing UIM dermatologists: 1) increasing the pipeline of UIM students to medical school, 2) increasing interest in dermatology among UIM medical students, and 3) increasing recruitment of UIM students into dermatology residency programs (Pritchett et al., 2018). We hosted this event to establish a point of entry into the dermatology pipeline for underrepresented minority students at the undergraduate level. Prior to the event, attendees viewed dermatology as a field primarily limited to superficial skin care in affluent communities. Following the event, attendees indicated they had gained a greater appreciation for the broad scope of dermatologic practice and its significance in the wellbeing of underserved minority populations.

Limitations of the study include the small sample size and limited representation of certain UIM groups. Our event coincided with undergraduate final examinations, which may have limited further attendance.

The singular nature of this intervention provides an additional opportunity for institutions with limited resources to play an instrumental role in increasing diversity in dermatology. Survey data and attendees’ verbal accounts affirmed the event achieved its stated objective of increasing interest in dermatology among UIM students. Additionally, the premedical students were energized to continue pursuing graduate medical education. Future programming may be an important strategy to improve interest in dermatology.

Conflicts of interest
None.

Funding
None.

Study approval
The author(s) confirm that any aspect of the work covered in this manuscript that has involved human patients has been conducted with the ethical approval of all relevant bodies.

Appendix A. Supplementary data
Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jijd.2021.01.024.

References
Kwatra SG, He A, Loss MJ, Okoye GA. Addressing minority representation in dermatology: Answering a call to action through structured mentorship and instruction. JAMA Dermatol 2017;153(12):1329–30.

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Table 1
Outline of lectures, activities, and discussions.

| Session          | Content                                              |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Introduction     | Pre-curriculum survey                               |
| Part 1 Lecture   | What is a dermatologist?                             |
|                  | Depiction of Steven–Johnson’s syndrome               |
|                  | Path to dermatology                                  |
|                  | Diversity in dermatology                             |
| Part 2 Discussion| Why did you choose dermatology?                      |
|                  | Panelist Q&A                                          |
| Part 3 Lecture   | Suturing techniques                                  |
| Activity         | Suture workshop                                      |
| Wrap-Up          | Post-curriculum survey                               |

Instructors in the lectures/discussions included medical students, resident physicians, and an attending physician.

Table 2
Attendee characteristics (n = 12).

| n (%)        |
|--------------|
| Age, mean ± standard deviation, y | 19 ± 1.57 |
| Educational status               |
| Undergraduate                       | 11 (91)  |
| Postbaccalaureate or other        | 1 (9)    |
| Race/ethnicity                    |
| Black or African American          | 10 (83)  |
| Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander| 0 (0)   |
| Hispanic or Latino                 | 2 (17)   |
| Before the event: Knowledge and attitudes toward dermatology |
| Shadowed a dermatologist in the past | 0 (0) |
| Received medical care from a dermatologist in the past | 3 (25) |
| Interested in a career in dermatology | 3 (25) |
| Important to have a career in which I serve the needs of underserved communities | 12 (100) |
| Dermatology is important for the wellbeing of people of color | 11 (92) |
| Dermatology is a field that serves the health needs of underserved communities | 8 (66) |
| Dermatology is a field where I can find support and mentorship | 8 (66) |
| After the event: Knowledge and attitudes toward dermatology |
| Interested in a career in dermatology | 12 (100) |
| Dermatology is important for the wellbeing of people of color | 12 (100) |
| Dermatology is a field that serves the health needs of underserved communities | 12 (100) |
| Dermatology is a field where I can find support and mentorship | 12 (100) |

n refers to the number of attendees who answered that they agreed or strongly agreed on the survey.