Title: Teaching Motivational Interviewing to Health Education Students Improve Counseling Skills in Health Behavior Change in Yazd University of Medical Science

Abstract: Introduction: Motivational Interviewing is a clinical skill that has been used in a range of different contexts involving behavior change. It aims to help patients explore and resolve ambivalence to change. Evidence shows that Motivational Interviewing has shown potential in encouraging patient behavior change in health care settings. Motivational interviewing incorporates empathy, open-ended questions, and reflective listening as techniques to explore patient ambivalence and to decrease patient resistance to behavior change. The present study examined the effectiveness of motivational interviewing training on improving health education students’ knowledge of and confidence in their ability to counsel patients regarding health behavior change.

Method: 28 health education students (PhD and MS) from Yazd University of Medical Science participated in Motivational Interviewing workshop in the autumn of 2010. The workshop consists of one four-hour session. Students completed an identical pre-course and post-course questionnaire that measured their confidence and knowledge regarding counseling skills in health behavior change. The first section of the questionnaire contained 8 items regarding confidence in communication skills, ability to assess a patient’s “stage of change,” and whether the student felt confident in providing motivational interventions. The 5-item confidence scale ranged from “very confident” to “not sure of confidence level” to “very not confident”. The second portion of the questionnaire asked 4 multiple-choice knowledge based questions regarding the key concepts of MI and the appropriate interventions required for the patient's stage of change.

Result: The sample contained 85.7% females and 14.3% males and the mean age of students were 28.37 4.25. The students reported improved confidence in their understanding of motivational interviewing after participation in the workshop (somewhat confident, 78.6%) compared with before the workshop (somewhat confident, 14.3%). Each of the 8 confidence items were compared before and after the workshop using a signed rank test. All comparisons indicated a significant improvement (P<.001) in confidence. Regarding knowledge-based questions, students showed significant improvement; 23.65% of students answered all the questions correctly before the workshop, and 85.7% answered all the questions correctly after the workshop, (P<.05).

Discussion: These results show that teaching motivational interviewing techniques to health education students can enhance student confidence in and knowledge of providing counseling to patients regarding health behavior change.