



Abstract of Presentation

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Behavioral impact of a genetics-focused, web CME for physician assistants: a randomized trial

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Context While web-based CME have gained wide popularity, few programs have attempted to assess impact in terms of clinically relevant behavior. The current study was designed to determine if a web-based CME program developed by the National Coalition for Health Professionals in Genetics (NCHPEG) targeting Physicians Assistants would produce changes in targeted clinically relevant communication behavior.

Methods Randomized controlled trial of 40 PAs assigned to a web-based CME program developed by NCHPEG (n=18) or control group (n=22) drawn from a nationally representative sample of PAs attending the 2010 American Academy of Physician Assistants Annual Meeting. CME impact was based on analysis of a simulated patient (SP) session in which a possible hereditary cancer risk was presented. SP session communication was coded using the Roter Interaction Analysis System (RIAS) and assessed for completeness of family history. Questionnaires assessed PA practice characteristics and ratings of session realism and similarity to routine practice.

Results Web group PAs elicited more complete family history (6.9 vs 5.0 identified family members of a 13 member pedigree; $t = 2.2, p < .05$) and a more detailed family history of cancer (3.1 vs 2.2 identified cancer links of 4 affected family members; $2.9, p < .001$). Web group PAs asked more medical questions and but engaged in less psychosocial exchange (all contrasts $p < .05$) and were significantly less patient centered overall than control group PAs ($p < .01$).

Conclusion The web-based CME produced objectively measured changes in clinically relevant behavior. However, these changes were also associated with a decrease in patient-centeredness. The findings suggest future research is warranted to understand important but unintended consequences of clinically relevant behavior change.