

How empathic are pharmacy students?

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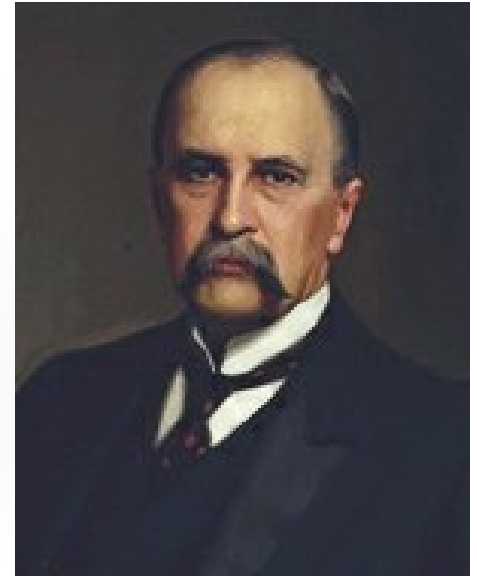
Background to study

- Effective consultation is important component of patient care
- Main consultation models, Pendleton, Inner Consultation Model, Information-exchange model and DREAM have empathy or equivalent as an element
- Empathy linked to improved outcomes¹.



Sir William Osler, physician 1849-1919

“It is important to know what kind of man has a disease, as it is to know what kind of disease a man has.”



Empathy defined

- Einfühlung (german) after em pathos (Greek)
feeling into
- Not sympathy but compassionate detachment
- “Walking in another’s shoes”



Relevance of empathy to pharmacy

- Shift to a more patient-focused approach from a traditional supply role
- New services which need effective consultation skills including empathy



Previous work

- GPs were more empathic than pharmacists²
- Why? Is it about the training we give our students?



Aims of study

- To measure empathy in MPharm students and medical students and compare results with respect to year of study, age, gender and previous experience.



Quantitative method

- Choose a validated tool to measure empathy
- Self-assessment
- 6 tools available
- Literature search & e-mail authors
- Jefferson Scale of Physician empathy chosen (20 likert items) – student version
- Extensively used, has validated scale for health professionals, gave consent



Examples of some of items in scale

- I try to imagine myself in my patients' shoes when providing care to them
- I try not to pay attention to my patients' emotions in history taking or in asking about their physical health
- I do not enjoy reading non-medical literature or arts



Subjects

- University Ethics Approval
- Questionnaire included empathy measure and demographics: course, age, gender, previous experience
- Questionnaire given to:

120	Year one	Pharmacy students
125	Year three	Pharmacy students
137	Year one	Medical students
158	Year three	Medical students



Results

- Overall response rate: 60.0% (324/540)
- Year one Pharmacy students: 75.8% (91/120)
- Year three Pharmacy students: 57.6% (72/125)
- Year one Medical students: 61.3.% (84/137)
- Year three Medical students: 48.7% (77/158)
- Internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha): 0.799



Course and empathy scores

Course Year	n	Mean Empathy score	SD
Pharmacy 1	91	101.4	14.6
Pharmacy 3	72	104.4	14.2
Medicine 1	84	108.2*	11.4
Medicine 3	77	111.4**	10.9

* $p < 0.001$ v year 1 pharmacy students

** $p < 0.001$ v year 3 pharmacy students



Gender and empathy scores

Gender of Participant	Mean Empathy Score	SD	n
Male	105.0	14.1	104
Female	106.8	13.1	220



Age and empathy scores

Age range	n	Mean empathy score	SD
18-20	153	105.8	13.0
21-25	124	106.3	14.3
26-30	33	107.3	11.7
31-35	11	111.8	9.6
36+	3	90.0	20.8



Previous experience and empathy scores

Previous experience	n	Mean empathy score	SD
yes	172	108.5*	11.7
no	152	103.6	14.8

* $p < 0.001$ v students with no experience



Previous Experience and Course

Course	N (%) with previous experience
Pharmacy year 1 (n=91)	36 (39.6)
Medicine year 1 (n=84)	53 (63.1)



Discussion

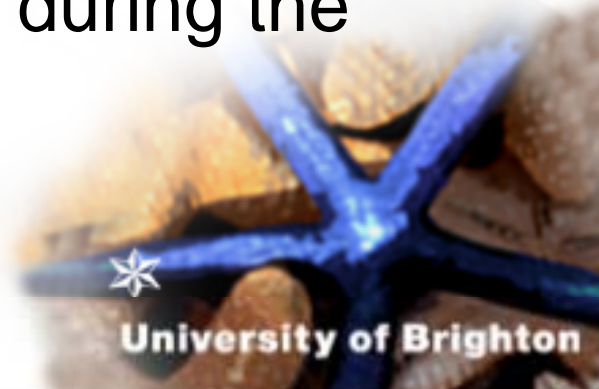
- Students start medicine with more empathy
- More medical students have previous experience of healthcare
- Do the students gain empathy during their experience or are they already empathic?
- Empathy levels increase similarly between years 1 to 3 for both courses



Discussion

- Gender – many studies report female empathy scores higher than male scores^{3,4,5}.
- Age – findings support current literature – variable

Overall, patient contact should be encouraged in pharmacy applicants & maintained during the course but more work is needed.



References

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- 3 Eisenberg N and Lennon R, (1983), Psychol. Bull. 94: 100-131
- 4 Bylund CL and Makoul G, (2002), New Ideas Psychol. 23 (3):177-207
- 5 Hojat M et al, (2002), Am. J. Psychiat. 159:9

