

INTRODUCTION

- In 2008, over 4% of the U.S population had a serious mental health illness, which is defined as follows.¹
 - A mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder (excluding developmental and substance use disorders)
 - Diagnosable currently or within the past year
 - Of sufficient duration to meet diagnostic criteria specified within the 4th edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)*
 - Resulting in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities
- In South Carolina, an estimated 9.6% of the population had illicit drug or alcohol abuse/dependence problems, with rates as high as 21% in the 18-25 years of age group.¹
- Charleston County has many organizations and services geared towards treating and helping patients cope with problems dealing with mental health and substance abuse.
- The purpose of this study is as follows:
 - To determine the level of awareness of MUSC students across all disciplines regarding available mental health and substance abuse resources in the Charleston area
 - To identify reasons for not using available resources
 - To evaluate the preparedness of MUSC students to inform and refer patients to different resources available in the Charleston area

METHODS

- A survey was distributed via email to all colleges at the Medical University of South Carolina.
- The survey was designed to collect the following information:
 - Demographic Data
 - Knowledge of available resources in Charleston and whether they would recommend using them
 - Reasons why available resources would not be used or recommended
- Survey responses were further broken down by gender, age, year of study, and years spent living in Charleston.
- Confidentiality was kept throughout the entire period of the survey.

RESULTS

Figure 1. Demographics

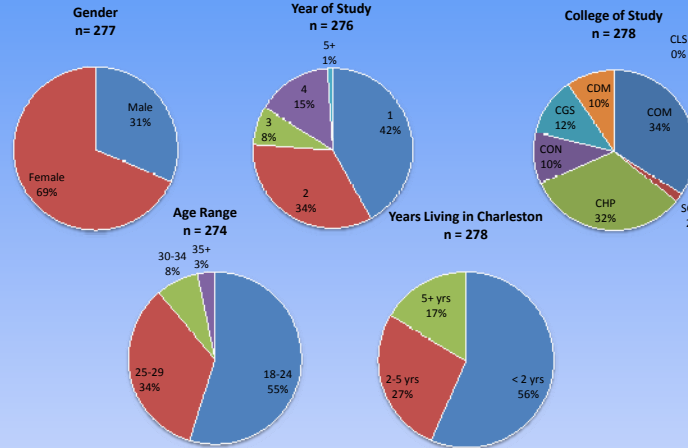


Figure 2. Top 10 Most Known Services for Mental Health

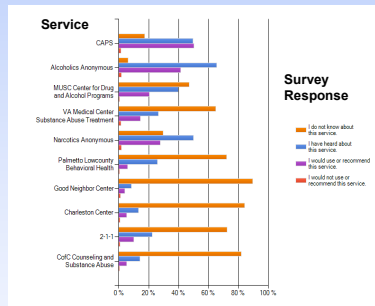


Figure 3. Least Known Mental Health Services

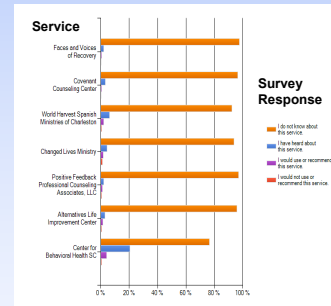


Figure 4. Knowledge of Alcohol Abuse Resources

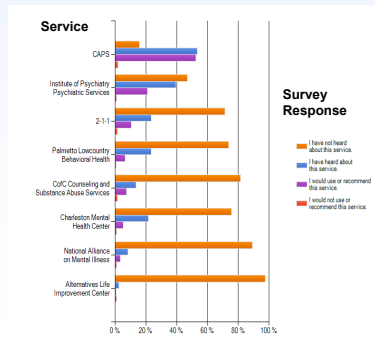
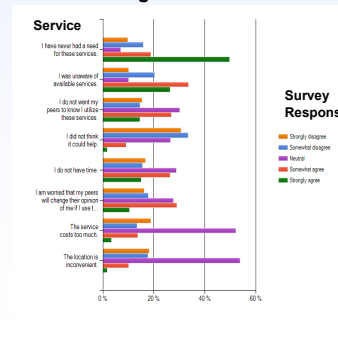


Figure 5. Reasons for Not Using Services



DISCUSSION

- 304 students initiated the survey, 281 were completed.
- The majority of responders were female, from the college of medicine or health professions and in their 1st or 2nd year study.
- A majority of students were unaware of available resources for mental health and substance abuse problems.
- The amount of time spent living in Charleston did not correlate with an increased knowledge of mental health and substance abuse help centers in the community.
- Most students were aware of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), but were unaware of other services including: 2-1-1, Palmetto Lowcountry Behavioral Health, Alternatives Life Improvement Center, Changed Lives Ministry, the Charleston Center, and many more.
- Half of the students surveyed could have utilized services in the past but did not.
- Thirty-nine percent of students are hesitant to access services because of the stigma associated with mental health and substance abuse.
- Interesting free responses to the question "What is the biggest barrier to seeking and suggesting help?"
 - "How others would judge you or over-stepping my boundaries by suggesting help."
 - "It is easier to let the problem continue."
 - "Finding out what is most appropriate for the patient."

CONCLUSION

- Most resources available to students are under utilized.
- Most students are unaware of available resources in the Charleston area.
- Lack of time, awareness, and peer opinions are reasons most frequently cited for not utilizing resources.
- In order for patients to receive optimal care for substance abuse and mental health problems, professional health care providers need to have greater knowledge about available resources.
- Future direction for this project will be to share these survey results with CAPS and curriculum development committees in order to implement education strategies and to enhance knowledge and awareness about available resources.

REFERENCES