Implementing a Substances of Abuse Outreach Program in the Rochester City School District.

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Implementing a Substances of Abuse Outreach Program in the Rochester City School District.

Abstract
Objective: This program aims to provide substances of abuse education to local high school students.

Methods: An outreach program, modeled after the National Institute on Drug Abuse instructional materials, was developed by student pharmacists and faculty for delivery to the Rochester City School District. Strict regulations prevented admittance into any classrooms until the program was presented to all health teachers at a district-wide meeting. Approval was given to begin working in the classrooms in April 2011. The program was first adopted in two health education classes at Edison Tech (May 2011). Information was presented to students using lecture, small group discussion, and printed materials. The topic covered, marijuana, was based on the teacher’s preference. A formative assessment was used to address student perceptions of the program due to the small number of students in each of the classes (n = 5–7). The teacher of record in the classroom conducted the assessment interviews.

Results: Student feedback included comments such as, “We liked them and appreciate the time they took to come in,” “I didn’t know about pharm parties” and, “I learned a lot”. Feedback from the teacher also reflected the positive impact of the program in his classroom: “There is a perception that the outside community does not care about urbanites and this program at the very root reverses that dynamic very clearly. My hope is that we can develop an ongoing relationship.” Conclusion: The timing of program approval by the school district impeded broad implementation for spring 2011; however, plans are in place for several schools in spring 2012. The opportunity to pilot the program with Edison Tech was beneficial and provided valuable feedback for improvement. Student pharmacists are in a unique position to provide this education and are viewed as approachable and non-threatening to high school–aged students.

Disciplines
Education | Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences

Comments
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Implementing a Substances of Abuse Outreach Program in the Rochester City School District

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OBJECTIVE
This program aimed to provide substances of abuse education to local high school students.

INTRODUCTION
Drug use has been on the rise during the new millennium. This is to be expected as a large part of our population is aging and is shifting toward polypharmacy for disease management. What is not expected is the recent rising trend toward abuse of both illicit and non-illicit drugs in our younger population.

A group of faculty and students from the Wegmans School of Pharmacy in Rochester, NY created an outreach program to be delivered within the local school district. The group attended health education classes within a local inner-city high school, Thomas A. Edison Career and Technical Education High School. The school’s student body is approximately 90% African American and 6% Hispanic. The health education class consisted of students in grades 11 and 12.

The health teacher of record indicated a need for education on marijuana, so the outreach was tailored to meet this need. However, it is also known that prescription drug misuse is on the rise.

Subsequently, the group focused their scope on educating students on the facts and myths about marijuana, while still allowing an open forum for discussing any other drug topics the students were concerned with.

METHODS
An outreach program, modeled after the National Institute on Drug Abuse instructional materials, was developed by pharmacy students and faculty for delivery to the Rochester City School District. Strict regulations prevented admittance into any classrooms until the program was presented to all students of scholars. By drawing from their own experiences in high school, college, and pharmacy school, pharmacy students were able to educate high school students on illicit and non-illicit drugs they encounter in their own experiences. This program is unlike any other that provides education to high school students, and the positive bond formed between the two institutions gives a model of the benefit of educational community-outreach programs.

“A prescription for prevention” Pharmacy students present a unique perspective of being able to provide qualified, reliable information on all classes of drugs from a common position of “student” to the next generation of scholars. By drawing from their own experiences in high school, college, and pharmacy school, pharmacy students were able to educate high school students on illicit and non-illicit drugs they encounter in their own experiences. This program is unlike any other that provides education to high school students, and the positive bond formed between the two institutions gives a model of the benefit of educational community-outreach programs.

Q. Is marijuana addictive, does it produce withdrawal symptoms when someone quits using it?
Q. Does smoking marijuana cause lung cancer?
Q. Does using marijuana lead to other drug use?
Q. What are marijuana’s short-term effects?
Q. How does marijuana work?
Q. What is marijuana? Are there different kinds?

Student feedback included comments such as: “We liked them and appreciate the time they took to come in,” “I didn’t know about pharm parties,” and “I learned a lot.” Feedback from P4 student Rachel Jarbe, who participated in the outreach, included “The potential factors contributing to drug misuse and abuse among adolescents are sources of concern. As future pharmacists, it can be our responsibility to bring research-based projects like this that are specific and relevant to the students.”

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS
The timing of program approval by the school district impeded broad implementation for spring 2011. However, plans are in place for several schools in spring 2012. The opportunity to pilot the program with Edison Tech was beneficial and provided valuable feedback for improvement.

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