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## Assessing the Impact of an Educational Healthcare Competition in Enhancing Student Knowledge of Public Health

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## **Assessing the Impact of an Educational Healthcare Competition in Enhancing Student Knowledge of Public Health**

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**Background:** Educational disparities have a huge impact on unequal healthcare outcomes. Students from underserved areas often lack awareness of healthcare disparities impacting their communities. This study aimed to develop and assess the effectiveness of a program conducted by medical students to enhance high school students' understanding of these disparities in their home, the Rio Grande Valley.

**Methods:** The Education Collaboration for Aspiring Health Professionals (ECAHP) competition is a one-day annual program. It is designed and implemented by UTRGV medical students in collaboration with the School of Medicine's Area Health Education Center Program (AHEC). The program targets high school students from the Rio Grande Valley.

A sample of high school students (n=) were recruited through local high school educators. The program consists of case scenarios that show real-world healthcare disparities developed by medical students. Students then participate in discussions that analyze the scenarios and propose solutions to improve the patient's situation utilizing real-world resources from the Rio Grande Valley. This allows students to become aware of local resources that are available. A pre- and post-event survey was administered to assess the changes in the participants' understanding of healthcare disparities in the Rio Grande Valley. The survey utilizes a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended questions which measured the changes in the students' understanding of the healthcare disparities affecting their hometown.

**Results:** Data analysis is ongoing. However, preliminary results are expected by [date] and will be presented at the symposium.

**Conclusions:** This study is expected to demonstrate the effectiveness of the ECAHP competition in creating a deeper understanding of the healthcare disparities present in underserved communities among high school students. The results will create a better understanding of how effective evidence-based educational interventions are in increasing awareness of healthcare disparities in the next generation of healthcare professionals.