

EMPATHY TRAINING IN UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION PROMOTES PATIENT-CENTERED COMMUNICATION

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How the Problem was Identified and Explored

- ❖ Patient-centered communication skills are an integral part of Interpersonal Communication Skill competencies.
- ❖ Our medical students' empathy tends to decline during the clerkship years, as measured by the Jefferson Empathy Scale (JES) longitudinally.
- ❖ A randomized trial from Germany (Wündrich et al, 2017, PMID: 28749198):

Students who received empathy skills training achieved significantly higher levels of empathy to promote patient-centered communication.

Setting and Participants

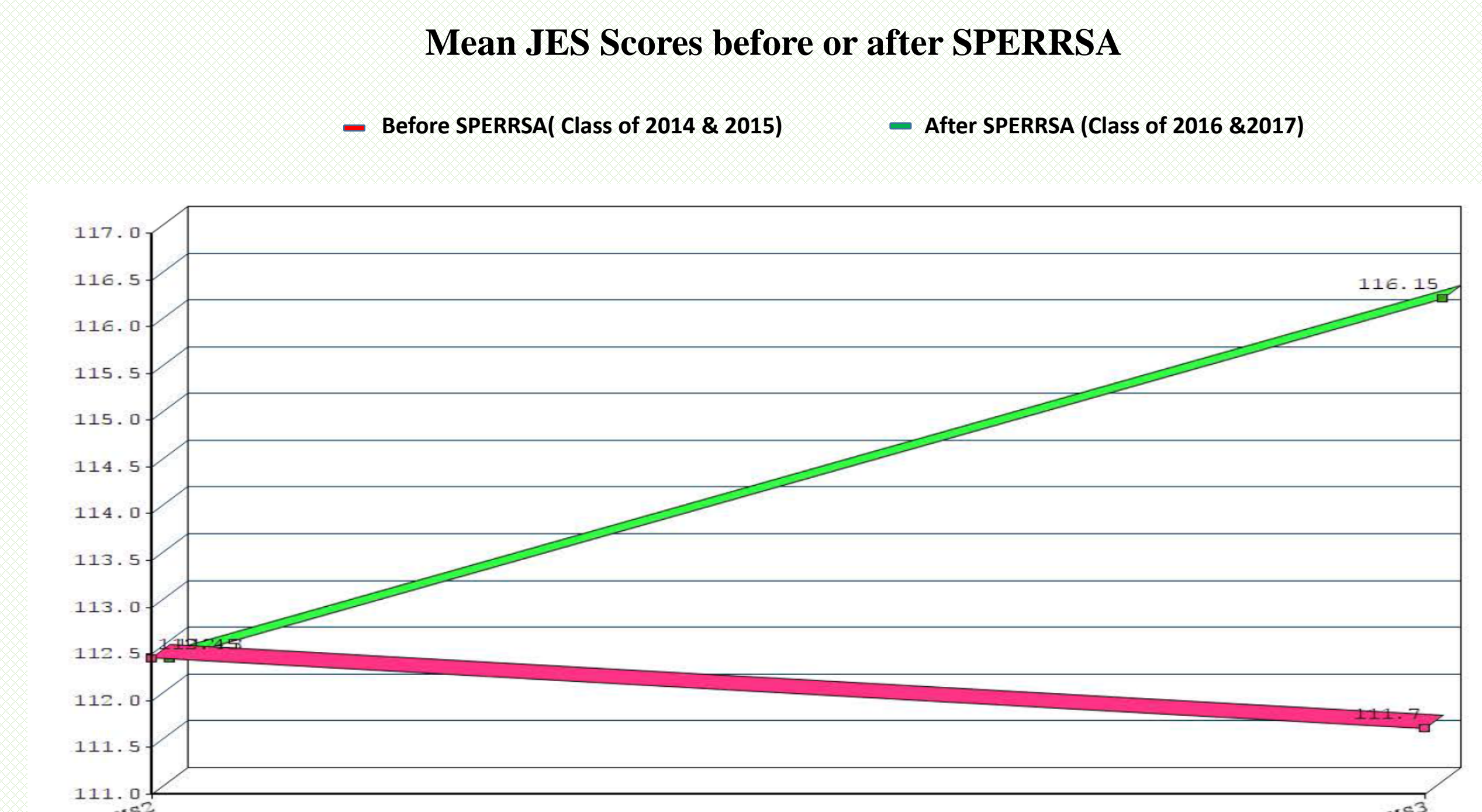
- ❑ Medical Skills Course faculty
- ❑ Pre-clerkship medical students (MS-1)



Results

- ❖ Before the introduction and participation of the SPERRSA sessions, the mean Jefferson Empathy Scores (JES) of each graduating class showed a drop in JES during clerkship years.
- ❖ The reverse of this trend is evident after the integration of the SPERRSA sessions in the Medical Skills Course curriculum.

Jefferson Empathy Mean Scores by Graduating Class



Description of the Innovation

- ❖ **Standard Patient Review and Reflective Self-Assessment (SPERRSA):** Small group learning sessions in the curriculum of the Medical Skills Course for the purpose of fostering empathy and compassion among pre-clerkship medical students to enhance patient-centered communication
- ❖ One hour session facilitated by master's prepared registered nurse educators in the faculty
- ❖ **BEFORE the session:** Each *student*
 - ❖ reviews a pre-recorded video of their standardized patient encounter and a narrated PowerPoint slide show on best practices for patient-centered communication and empathy; and
 - ❖ completes a self-reflective questionnaire that includes questions about the use of empathy and response to emotions during the encounter.
- ❖ **During the session:**
 - ❖ Each *group* reviews a video encounter of one of the volunteered students.
 - ❖ Faculty facilitates discussion and provides critique of interpersonal communication skills observed during the standardized patient encounter, using a standardized rubric.

Discussion, Reflections, and Lessons Learned

- ❖ Completed student reflection forms revealed students' comprehension, insight and understanding of mindfulness practices, emotional intelligence and caring competencies.
- ❖ Reversal in the previous decline in student empathy scores in clerkship years demonstrated successful cultivation of effective patient-centered communication and physician-patient relationship.
- ❖ SPERRSA equipped students with knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop insight and understanding of human emotions, allowing one to reflect and improve interpersonal communication.
- ❖ Empathy training can positively impact students' interpersonal communication skills through innovative educational models.