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Photovoice: A tool to intervene in obese patients and medical students

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Abstract

Background: Scientific literature indicates that body weight is highly influenced not only by genetics and medical conditions, but also by social, cultural and environmental barriers. Health care providers often do not take barriers into account and are frequently unaware that barriers exist. We conducted a photovoice project among ambulatory obese individuals to describe to medical students the struggles and barriers they face due to their weight.

Methods: Photovoice participants were recruited via health care providers. Participants attended a 3 hour session focused on describing the photovoice technique. Participants were instructed to use disposable cameras to take 10 photos. The study team reviewed the photographs and discussed them with the participants; participants were then videotaped describing barriers they photographed. The video was shown during Family Medicine clerkship to 3rd year medical students who were asked questions after viewing the video including, “How did this impact you” “What effect did this have on you?”Qualitative responses were evaluated by the study team.

Results: Eleven participants with BMI of $\geq$30 were recruited and videotaped.4of 11 participants reported losing weight after their photovoice experience. Ninety-four medical students viewed the video; responses to questions varied from, “I found myself getting frustrated listening to their stories” to “It made me realize the psychological aspects that go into being overweight”.

Conclusion: Photovoice allowed obese patients to describe weight-related barriers and resulted in behavior changes in some participants.The mixed responses to the video illustrate the need for additional intervention to insure obese patients are treated empathetically.

Biography

Mara Z. Vitolins completed herDrPH and MPH at Loma Linda University.She is Professor and Vice Chair in the Department of Epidemiology and Prevention at the Wake Forest School of Medicine. She is a registered dietitian.

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