

Developing Professional Identity in Healthcare Students Through Peer Interactions

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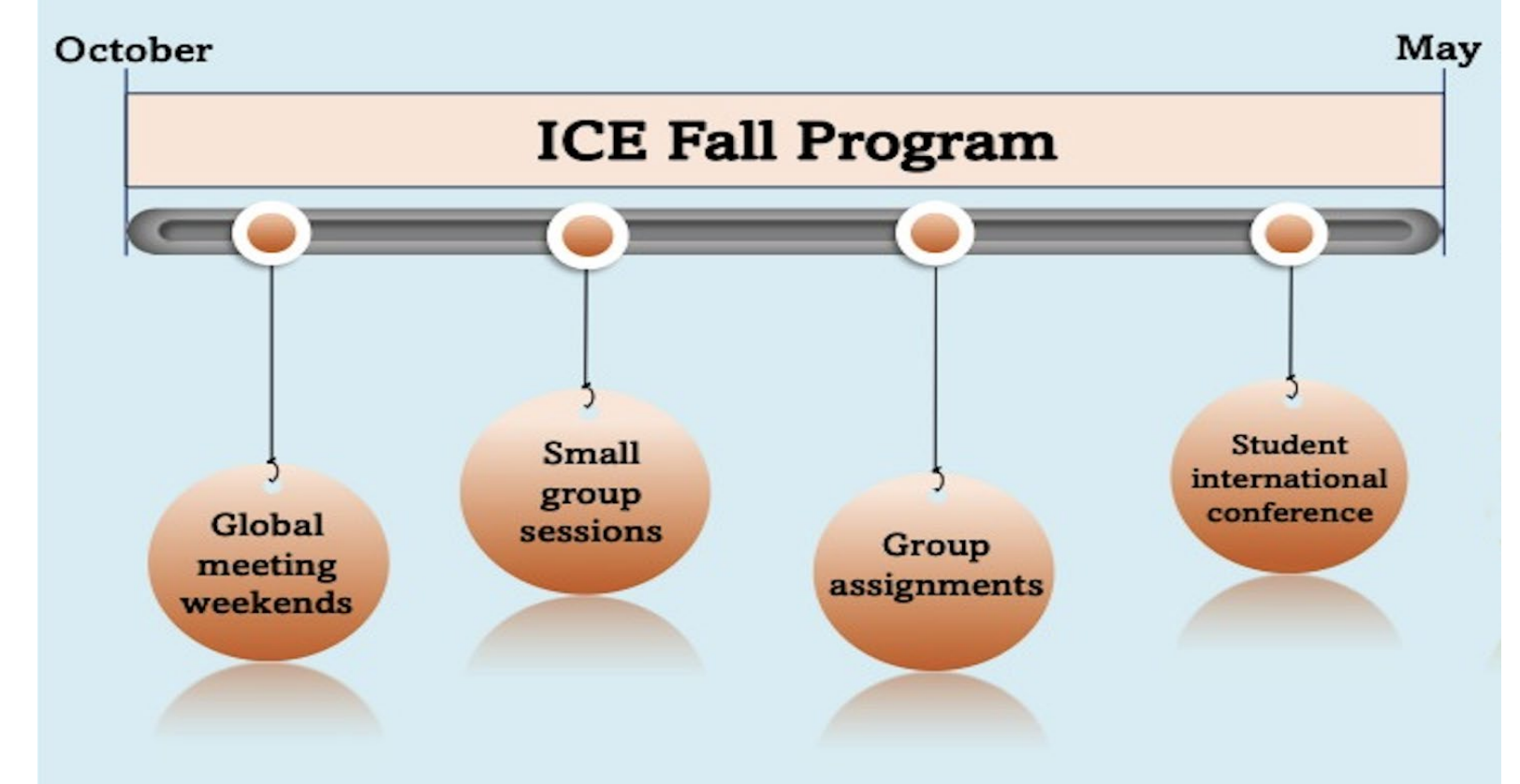
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INTRODUCTION

- Developing a professional identity (PI) is a critical component of healthcare education. It equips students with an understanding of the core values and essential attributes of their profession.¹ Therefore, an examination of the principles that establish one's PI is imperative in guiding students to foster professionalism and professional behavior.²
- The aim of this study is to quantitatively assess the self-perceived levels of PI among health professions students from 21 universities around the world before and after a hybrid peer exchange program. The results of this study will offer medical educators insight into diverse approaches for developing students' PI formation.

ICEP Elements:



RESULTS

MATERIALS & METHODS

Participants

- Participants were recruited from the International Collaboration and Exchange Program (ICEP)*, an international hybrid student networking and exchange program for junior medical and health professions students.

*Details of ICEP



- In addition to virtual interchanges, students were offered the opportunity to partake in academic immersion travels (AIT) for 1 week in Paris.

Questionnaire

- A validated questionnaire (PISQ)³ used to assess their level of PI was administered to 334 students before and after ICEP.
- Students were asked to self-evaluate different aspects of their professional identity on a 6-point Likert-type scale ("not true at all" to "very true").
- Topics of PI assessed included how students felt about working with other professionals, communicating with/assessing patients, engaging in culturally diverse environments, considering ethical/moral issues, using patient records, handling emergencies, and teaching others.

Analysis

- Statistical analysis of the data was carried out using RStudio to compare variations between select groups:
 - Pre vs. Post ICEP
 - No participation vs participation in AIT

Figure 1. Participant Demographics by Region of the World

Regional Distribution of Participants		
Region	%	n
Australia	0.30%	1
East Asia	13.68%	45
Europe	61.70%	203
North America	16.11%	53
Other	8.21%	27
Total	100.00%	329

Figure 2. Comparison Between Pre and Post Hybrid Program

Pre vs. Post ICEP

(1 - "not true at all" to 6 - "very true")

ICEP	Mean (SD)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Int.		P-value
			Lower	Upper	
Pre	3.37 (1.52)	0.33	0.19	0.47	<0.005
Post	3.03 (1.48)				

- Upon the completion of ICEP, students reported having a higher level of PI compared to before the program. Lower value reports indicate a higher level of professional identity.

Figure 3. Comparison Between Students With and Without AIT

Participation vs. No Participation in Academic Immersion Travels

(1 - "not true at all" to 6 - "very true")

AIT	Mean (SD)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Int.		P-value
			Lower	Upper	
No Participation	3.12 (1.43)	0.31	0.03	0.59	0.03
Participation	2.81 (1.57)				

- Students who participated in the short-term AIT also reported having a higher level of PI compared to those who did not.

DISCUSSIONS & CONCLUSIONS

- The data presented here supports a positive correlation between enhanced peer interactions and self-perceived PI.
- Those who participated in AIT had the additional opportunity to further their collaboration with fellow students and professionals by embracing diverse perspectives from around the world. Though its duration was short, it had a significant impact on students' PI.
 - Student visits are designed for students to network with other students and faculty within participating school.
 - Social interactions allow for diverse opportunities for students to immerse themselves in their profession, engage with like-minded individuals, and gradually cultivate a stronger sense of professionalism.¹
- An interactive peer exchange program that offers opportunities to have both small and large group discussions, in a platform to relay thoughts and experiences about shared topics can support the formation of PI in health profession students.

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