

Abstract

Programs that expose high school students to healthcare careers and medical opportunities are widely implemented. These programs provide students guidance for academic courses, standardized test-taking, research opportunities, and career development. The objective of this study is to estimate the proportion of healthcare professionals that benefit from these programs. We assessed this by surveying current graduate students in healthcare doctoral/advanced practice degree programs. We hypothesized that at least 20% of the health professional students surveyed utilized these programs at least once. We also assessed survey data to examine the efficacy and equity of these programs and hypothesized that they disproportionately advantage students based on factors of socioeconomic status, race, and resource availability. Of 136 respondents, 44% stated that they had participated in a health career guidance program, 93% of whom stated it was influential in their ability to successfully pursue their career. At the time of their participation in these opportunities, 65% of respondents reported living in urban settings vs. 35% in rural settings. 62% of the rural locations were designated as medically underserved vs. only 21% of the urban locations. Lastly, white students were overrepresented in the group, making up 68% of the respondents who participated in a career guidance program. We aim to further study these programs' curriculum and methods so that we can compile a comprehensive guide to implementing an effective and equitable health career guidance program.