

Retraumatization in Undergraduate Medical Education: Evaluating the Prevalence and Support Resources Available to Students

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INTRODUCTION

- The CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study has been used as a resource in clinical practice when addressing the adverse health outcomes associated with childhood trauma.
- Those with higher ACE scores are significantly more likely to report mental health effects and are at higher risk of retraumatization (Sciolla 2019).
- Retraumatization is defined as a conscious or unconscious reminder of past trauma that results in a re-experiencing of the initial trauma event. It can be triggered by a situation, an attitude or expression, or by certain environments that replicate the dynamics (loss of power/control/safety) of the original trauma (Zgoda 2016).
- Among non-medical graduate students, roughly 50% of students have reported experiencing traumatization during their coursework (Butler 2017).
- Retraumatization has yet to be evaluated in Undergraduate Medical Education.

AIMS

- 1) Explore the prevalence of retraumatization in medical education
- 2) Identify specific areas of UME that are triggering
- 3) Evaluate effectiveness of psychological support available to students

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- Survey Design

Survey Distribution

Analysis
- Created by a multidisciplinary team of health professions educators and revised through an iterative process.
 - Survey was distributed to all medical students at IUSM through class and SIG listservs, and the weekly school-wide email (IU Med Weekly).
 - Data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel..
 - Likert scale responses were grouped such that “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” reflect a reported retraumatization (Figure 2); “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” were similarly grouped.



Student Population: 1400
Survey Respondents: 85 (6.07%)
Students With ACE: 38 (44.7%)
Students Unsure ACE: 15 (17.6%)

All respondents that reported having experienced an ACE or being unsure (n = 53, 62.4% of respondents) met inclusion criteria for completing the rest of the survey.

RESULTS

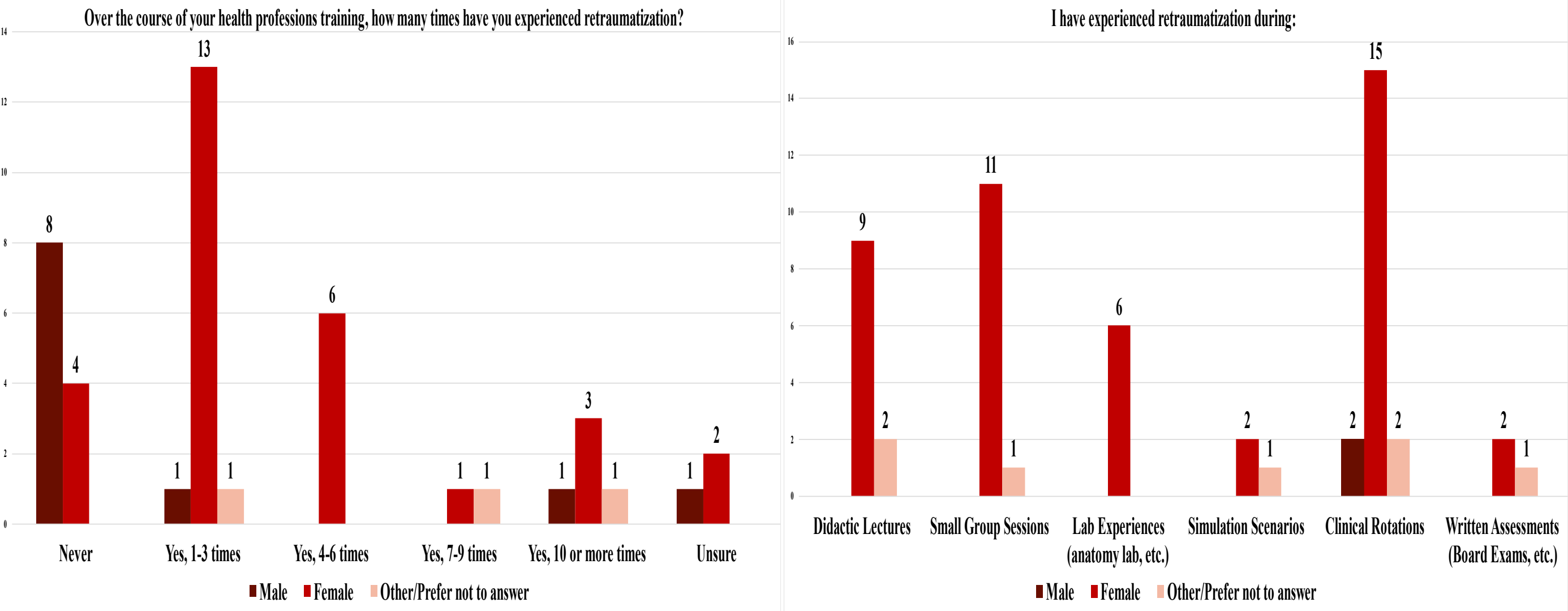


Figure 1. Frequency of retraumatization in medical students, stratified by self-identified gender.

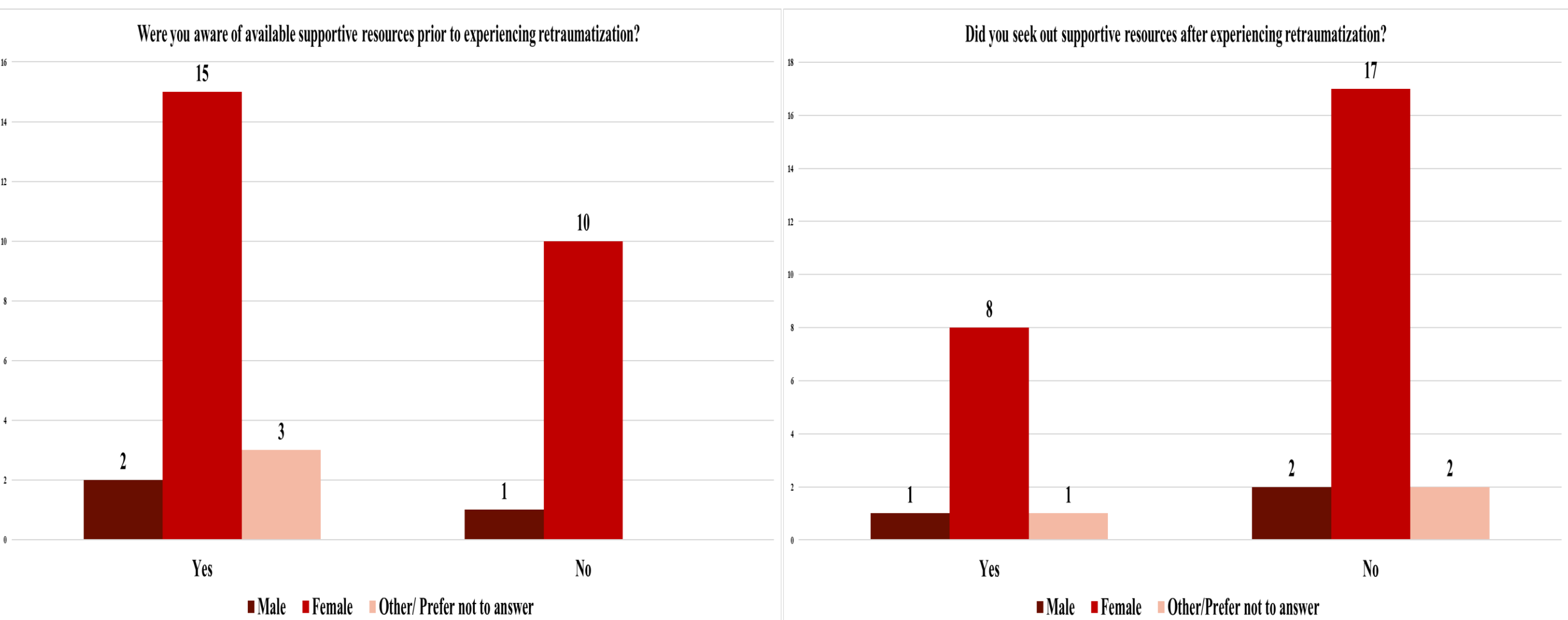


Figure 2. Prevalence of retraumatization in different learning experiences, stratified by self-identified gender.

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|---|--|
| Are there additional components of your health professions training that have been retraumatizing? | "We have had some instructors say very insensitive things." "Grand Rounds" "Written reflection assignments make assumptions about the experiences that students have had but they frequently have made me uncomfortable." |
| What resource(s) would have been helpful that was (were) not provided to you? | "I didn't know retraumatization was an actual experience (there are words to describe it) and wish that was discussed during orientation to clerkships, or somewhere." |
| Is there anything else you would like for us to know in response to completing this survey? | "Improved sexual assault education and sexual assault survivor training...would have been helpful..." "Discussing deaths from COVID-19... most people aren't aware that it can be triggering to keep discussing." "Trauma is usually thought of as a big one-time event, but the constant small comments have honestly had a larger impact on me..." |

CONCLUSIONS

- 1) Prior trauma among survey respondents was prevalent in 44.7% (n=38) of students. Of these students, retraumatization was experienced in 73.6% (n=28); students identifying as female comprised 82.1% (n=23) of retraumatized students. Among all respondents, the prevalence of retraumatization is 32.9%.
- 2) 67.9% (n=19) of respondents that experienced retraumatization identified clinical rotations as a traumatic setting. Females and students identifying as other genders also reported preclinical education as potential settings for retraumatization.
- 3) Despite the availability of support services for students, 11 students (20.7%) reported being unaware of resources for support when experiencing retraumatization. When asked about utilizing these services, the majority of those who had experienced retraumatization did not seek these out (67.7%, n=21). Those that did use support services reported that none of the services were harmful.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- This is the first study evaluating the prevalence of retraumatization in health professions students, specifically medical students.
- Future work will include multi-institutional collaboration to evaluate the prevalence of retraumatization at other institutions

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