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Utilization of the Theory of Planned Behavior in the Assessment of an Asynchronous Online Education Program for Primary Care Clinicians

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Abstract

Educating clinicians about policy changes and specialized topics is challenging due to barriers such as lack of time and inability to travel for in-person training. Asynchronous online education may address many barriers faced by primary care clinicians. However, to ensure that this type of education results in retention of information, assessment of the intended outcomes must be done. This study examines the use of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to develop an assessment strategy for an asynchronous online program aimed at improving use of screening and brief intervention (SBI) for alcohol, tobacco, and opioid use among primary care clinicians in Texas, USA. TPB guided the development of an assessment of knowledge, confidence, and intention to implement SBI. Questions were modified from existing measures and were piloted by practicing clinicians with follow-up focus groups to discuss the education program and the evaluation tool. The final evaluation tool included 12 knowledge questions, 7 confidence questions, and 6 questions about intention to implement. Evaluation of this survey indicated that the questions were useful to participants as a guide for what they were going to learn as well as a method to better understand what they learned from the program. Analyses of the assessment tool showed significant increase in the 3 TPB domains. In conclusion, using questions that were guided by TPB demonstrated utility for participants as well as for evaluation of how well the program improved knowledge, confidence, and intention to implement the program's objectives.

Keywords: online education, assessment, evaluation tool, theory-guided learning, clinical education