Surpassing the Stigma: Educating Students on the Importance of Mental Health

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Abstract
Mental health can be difficult to maintain, especially for students entering college. For this project, we created an education plan that can be carried out at colleges, such as WPI, providing information on six different mental health issues. A survey was distributed in order to determine the current state of students’ mental health on campus, and in five years the same survey will be used to determine the success of the project.

Project Goals/Objectives
Instill the idea that mental health is just as important as physical health
Educate students on six mental health issues that could impact their transition to college

Methods/Process
- Distribute survey to determine current status of mental health on campus
  Survey 1
  - Make pamphlets available to all students via SDCC
  - Include in orientation packets
  - Show short informational video during NSO and before weekend movies
  - Conduct same survey 5 years later to determine success of project

- Conduct same survey 5 years later to determine success of project
  Survey 2

Resources

Background
- 26% of the population suffer from a mental health disorder
- 95% of college counseling center directors believe the number of students with significant psychological problems is a growing concern on campus
- Second most prevalent neurological disorder among children
- Often associated with high intelligence
- Often diagnosed in college when students struggle to adjust to new independence
- About 30% of students report feeling so depressed that functioning was difficult
- More than 6% of college students report seriously considering suicide
- Especially concerning during stressful transition college
- Affects nearly 70% of students seeking psychiatric help
- Can severely impact students success in college if left untreated
- Will not go away by itself, so it is important to seek treatment/help
- Classified by uncontrolled tics
- These tics can increase as a result of stress such as the beginning of school
- Need no psychiatric help (35%)
- Needs some kind of help (65%)
- Did not seek help (55%)
- Sought and received help (10%)
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- Needs some kind of help (65%)
- Did not seek help (35%)
- Sought and received help (30%)

Conclusions/Recommendations
- By increasing awareness of these mental health issues, students are more likely to seek help if they need it, or to help a friend in need
- Through collaboration with Active Minds and the SDCC, the education plan can be spread to all of campus easily and will reach more students
- Over time a strong support network can be formed to help students with different mental health issues adjust to college life and be able to succeed