ONLINE MEDICAL EDUCATION IMPROVES PSYCHIATRISTS KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF CLINICALLY CHALLENGING CASES OF NARCOLEPSY

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INTRODUCTION

Narcolepsy is a chronic neurologic disorder that involves poor control of sleep-wake cycles. Patients with narcolepsy may fall asleep unexpectedly and in a variety of situations, including while at work, while eating, during a conversation, or while driving. Consequently, patients experience diminished quality of life due to increased risk of occupational accidents and other psychiatric comorbidities. Results from the Narcolepsy Disease Study showed that patients with narcolepsy had a very low rate of correct identification of the comorbidities of narcolepsy and increased risk of comorbidities, including mental illness, endocrine, obstructive sleep-disordered breathing, and cardiovascular disease, compared to the general population. Treatment and diagnosis of patients with narcolepsy is suboptimal, in part, due to the difficulty of properly assessing patients and its guidelines that do not reflect current treatment options. With the goal of improving outcomes in narcolepsy, a study was conducted to determine if an online educational activity could successfully improve the knowledge and competence of psychiatrists regarding management of patients with clinically challenging cases of narcolepsy and regarding the impact of medications on objective sleep tests.

METHOD

An online educational activity was presented in a video-based panel discussion between 3 expert faculty. The panel discussion incorporated synchronized slides and interactivity questions to encourage participation. Pre-assessment and post-assessment responses from the 175 psychiatrists who completed all pre- and post-assessment questions were included in the data analysis. After completing this educational intervention, there was a 42% relative improvement in the number of psychiatrists who chose the correct answer. The primary objectives of the research project were to determine if an online educational activity could successfully improve the knowledge and competence of psychiatrists regarding management of patients with clinically challenging cases of narcolepsy and regarding the impact of medications on objective sleep tests.

RESULTS

The 175 psychiatrists who completed pre- and post-assessment questions were included in the data analysis. After completing this educational intervention, there was a 42% relative improvement in the number of psychiatrists who chose the correct answer. The study concluded that this online educational activity could successfully improve the knowledge and competence of psychiatrists regarding management of patients with clinically challenging cases of narcolepsy and regarding the impact of medications on objective sleep tests.

CONCLUSIONS

Significant improvements were observed in the percentage of psychiatrists who correctly identified the potential teratogenic effects of drugs, the interpretation of diagnostic tools to assess narcolepsy, and the treatment of narcolepsy patients with cardiovascular comorbidities, who do not have narcolepsy. The need for increased knowledge and awareness among pharmacology practitioners regarding the management of patients with cardiovascular comorbidities is evident. In conclusion, our data support that an online educational activity could successfully improve the knowledge and competence of psychiatrists who have narcolepsy or are managing patients with narcolepsy and cardiovascular comorbidities.

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REFERENCES