



INTRODUCTION

Medical students often experience financial insecurity. Median educational debt for medical school graduates in 2019 was \$200,000¹. Mechanisms exist to reduce the financial burden of medical educational debt post-graduation; however, resources to reduce financial strain throughout school enrollment are limited.

METHODS

Students and faculty organized a free shopping experience in 2022 and 2023, where a total of 997 items were donated, and 757 (76%) items were deemed appropriate for clinical settings. The event lasted two hours but most students completed their shopping experience in approximately one hour. We administered optional, de-identified, pre- and post-event quality improvement surveys to evaluate student need and impact. A post-event institutional review board (IRB) exemption was obtained. Pre- and post-survey questions were analyzed via two-tailed paired t-tests, and statistical significance was defined as $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

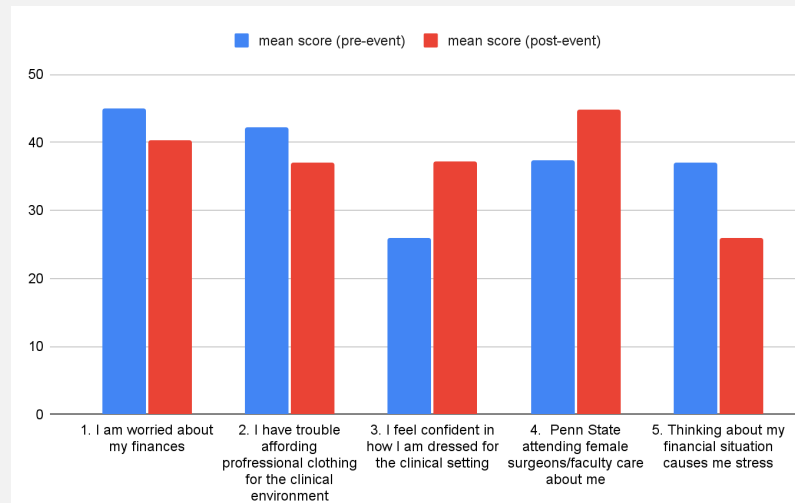
Of the 757 items displayed, 432 items (57%) were taken by 49 students who attended the events. 48 students completed pre-event surveys and 43 students completed post-event surveys. Worry over finances were reported in 62.5% of the pre and 67.4% post-event surveys ($p = 0.01$). Trouble affording professional clothing were reported in 54.2% of the pre and 55.8% of the post-event surveys ($p = 0.04$). Agreement with “PSUCOM surgeons care about me” was reported in 68.8% of the pre and 86.1% of the post-event surveys ($p < 0.001$). Baseline financial stress was reported by 100% pre- and 97.7% post-event ($p = 0.02$).

CONCLUSIONS

Findings from this project show the impact of contributions of professional attire on the financial situation and well-being of students. We aspire to broaden this endeavor to encompass donations from faculty members across disciplines, making professional clothing accessible to all post-graduate students. Moreover, clothing drives can be replicated at medical institutions nationwide to provide financial assistance and enhance student well-being in a sustainable way.

APPROACH

Threads for MedEd” was created to ease costs and address financial disparities associated with medical training by helping students access professional clothing for the clinical environment. The authors sought to determine the feasibility and impact of clothing donations made primarily from faculty to student doctors involved in the Association of Women Surgeons (AWS) student group, Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce (DEI), and Environmental Health and Medicine Student Interest Group at Penn State College of Medicine (PSUCOM)



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