

## Creating a Medical Humanities Mini-Course for Third Year Medical Students

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# Creating a Medical Humanities Mini-Course for Third Year Medical Students

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## Background

- Empathy declines during medical training.
- Burnout is negatively correlated with empathy and the prevalence is high among some medical students.
- Incorporating medical humanities and mindfulness has been shown to enhance empathy and promote wellness.

## Problem Statement

Can a mini-course series utilizing mindfulness and medical humanities promote wellness and empathy among SELECT medical students?

## Methods

### Curriculum development

- Education plan
  - Gap analysis & needs assessment
  - Expected Outcomes
  - Learning objectives related to domains of empathy and wellness
- Session content
  - Art appreciation and creation were used to enhance observation skills, emotional processing and mindfulness
  - Self-reflection and small group sharing were used to encourage perspective taking, awareness of self and others

### Implementation

- Three mini-course sessions
  - 2-hours, held virtually in small groups
  - Voluntary participation by MS3 students
  - MS4 student facilitator

### Course Evaluation

- Anonymous surveys
  - Alignment of content with objectives
  - Usefulness
  - Learner feedback & key take-aways

1. Please indicate the degree to which the activity met the learning objectives

	Not at all	Mostly unmet	Neither met nor unmet	Mostly met	Met very well
Learning objective 1					
Learning objective 2					
Learning objective 3					

2. How relevant was for you as a medical student and future physician?

	Not at all	Mostly irrelevant	Neither relevant or irrelevant	Mostly relevant	Very relevant

3. What were your key take-aways?

4. What feedback do you have for the facilitator?

## Results

Figure 1. Session I Course Evaluations

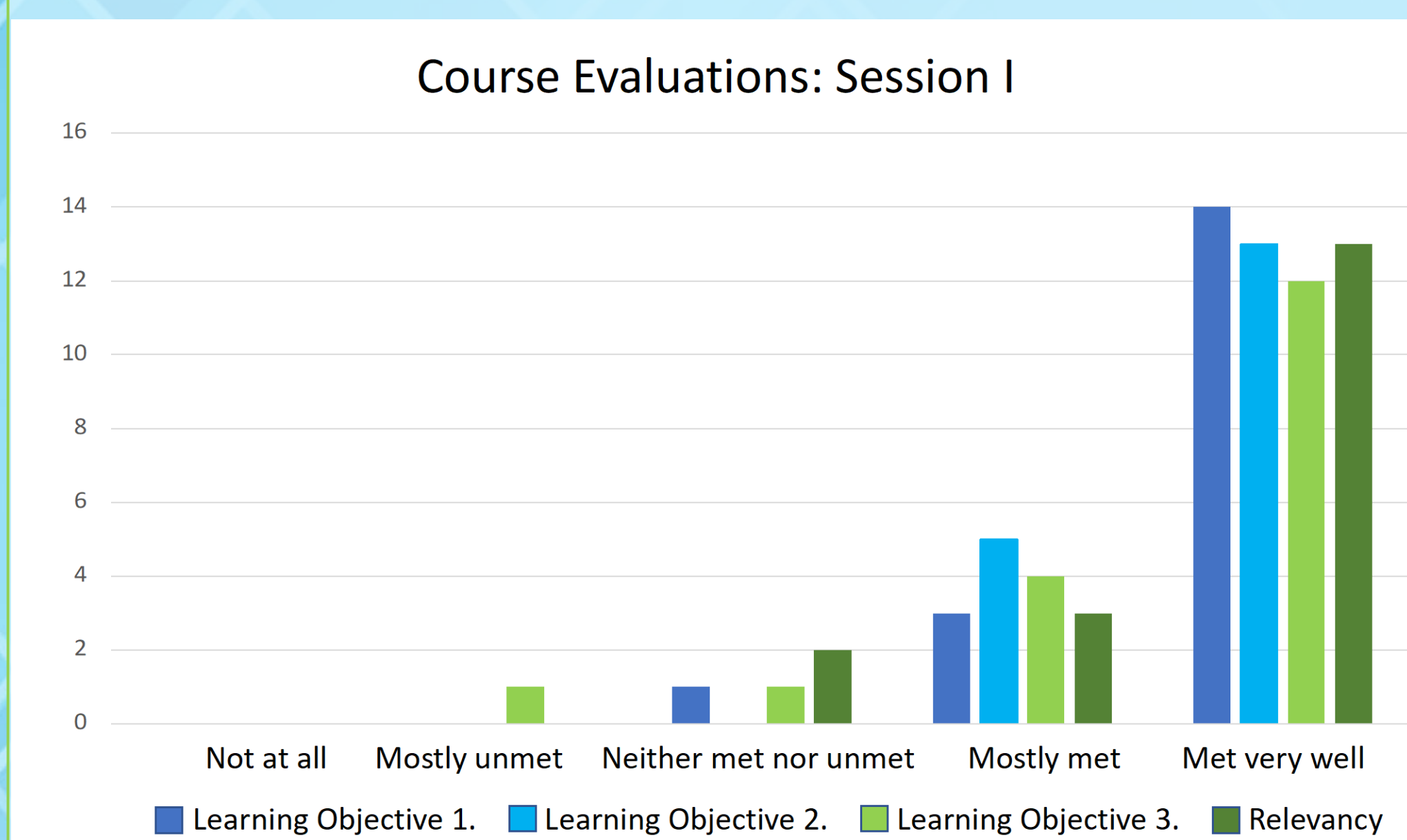
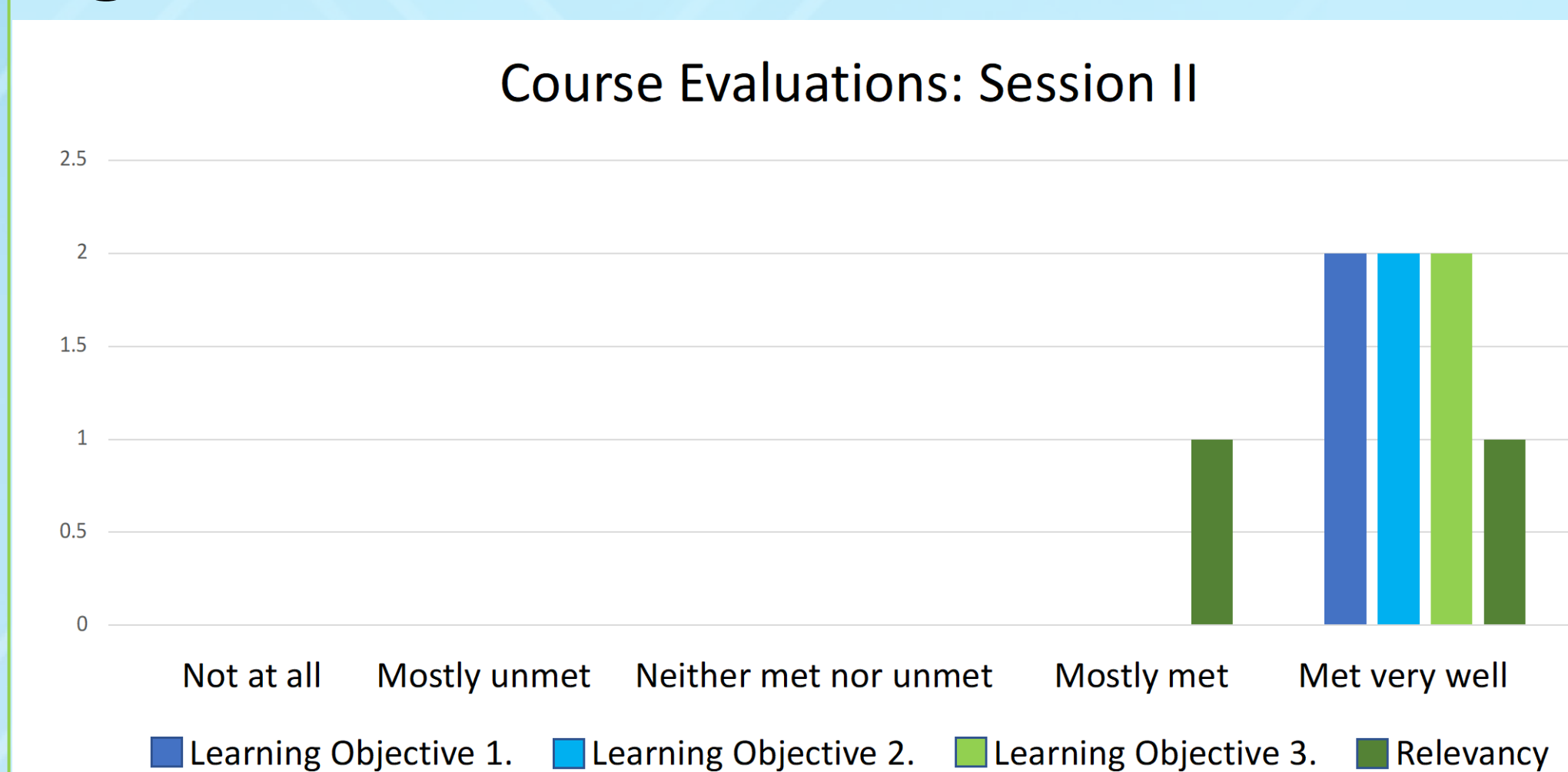


Figure 2. Session II Course Evaluations



- 90% (n=20) of participants indicated that the learning objectives were 'mostly' or 'very well' met.
- 91% (n=20) felt content was relevant for them as medical students and future physicians.

Table 3. Free Form Responses

Session I	Session II
Art can open your mind to different ways of viewing the world and situations	Expressing yourself through alternative means such as art can be both therapeutic and cathartic
Understanding a person's past may relate to how they view a current situation	Art can be a cathartic way of dealing with emotions, and may be helpful with stress in a medical career
I enjoyed seeing how other people's thoughts on pieces of artwork were very different from my initial thoughts, which speaks to how variable the human experience can be	

'This course was a much-needed break'

The content was 'relevant and important, but often overlooked'

## Discussion

- Preliminary data suggests that a medical humanities mini-course intervention can impact essential components of empathy
  - Self-awareness
  - Appreciation for the thoughts, emotions, values and viewpoints of others
- This may translate to greater empathy retention as students progress through medical training.
- The impact of the mini-course overall could not be measured, as the final session will be held on April 1, 2021.
- Evaluations with continuing medical education questions were used for data collection, rather than direct measures of empathy and burnout.
- Data interpretation is limited to inferential assessment of the conceptual constructs of empathy.

## Conclusion

- Maintaining empathy and preventing burnout are essential for healthcare providers and patients.
- A brief medical humanities intervention may help with empathy retention and burnout mitigation.
- Given that empathy levels decline over training, including medical humanities content during the clinical years may be particularly beneficial.

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