

An Analysis on Sexual Assault and Harassment Experienced by Physician Members of a National Organization During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, it is paramount that we survey medical professionals regarding sexual misconduct. (1) while also considering incidents such as cyber harassment and financial strain (2,3).

We conducted an anonymous survey to determine the prevalence and awareness of sexual assault (SA) and sexual harassment (SH) among physician attendees of 2023 American College of Physician (ACP) seminars on SA and SH.

A total of 49 subjects were included in the final analysis. 65.9% (n=29) were females, 60% (n=27) had been practicing medicine for 20 years. 8.9% (n=4) had experienced SA and 11.9% (n=5) experienced SH during the pandemic. 71.8% (n=28) were aware of their institution policy on SH and 61.5% (n=24) are aware of institution's policy on SA. 40.5% (n=17) agreed/strongly agreed that they felt safer when engaging with others online during the pandemic. Up to 87.2% believed that a perpetrator should self disclose on applications. Those who had practiced medicine between 0-10 years had the highest probability of experiencing SA (p=0.0055) and SH (p=0.0012), as compared to their counterparts. Interestingly enough, male physicians experienced SA (13.3% vs 7.1% for males and females respectively, p=0.6018) and SH (20% vs. 7.7%, p=0.3365) more frequently. Although not statistically significant, respondents facing financial stressors were more likely to experience SH (25% vs 4.2%, p=0.098).

In conclusion, our study highlighted the impact of the pandemic on prevalence and changes in SA and SH. Remote work conditions appeared to minimize the incidence of sexual misconduct. On a positive note, up to 72% of the respondents were aware of their institution's policies on SH. A larger study is required to confirm these findings.

References (maximum three)

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