

The Effects of a Student-Run Anatomy Mock Practical in the Nervous System Course on Student Anxiety, Confidence, and Preparedness

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Introduction

For many medical students, a novel exam format and the ever-present test anxiety can make anatomy practicals incredibly stressful. The well-documented neurophobia only further exacerbates anxiety in the case of a nervous system anatomy practical.¹ Studies have demonstrated a negative correlation between test anxiety and academic performance.^{2,3} The aim of administering a mock practical is to reduce anxiety to improve exam performance as well as student well-being.

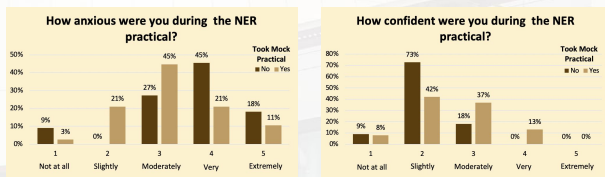
Methods

- 49 first-year medical students were administered a 25-question neuroanatomy mock practical 2 weeks before the actual gross anatomy practical
- The mock practical used similar questions, modalities, and testing conditions as the actual practical.
- To assess the effects of the mock practical, an anonymous survey was distributed to the entire class (n=83) following the completion of the actual anatomy practical. The survey closed before grades were released.

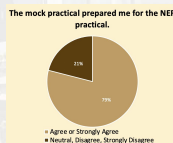
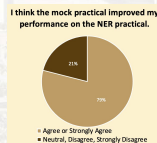
- To view survey:



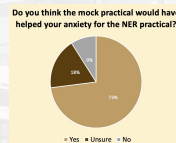
Results



Took Mock Practical



Didn't Take Mock Practical



Student Comments

-"Stopped relying on Anki so much and started physically coming into lab"
 -"Helped me **prioritize** what I needed to study more, allowing me to **efficiently** go through material"
 -"It increased anxiety in the lead-up, but **eased my anxiety** during the practical. The increased anxiety in the lead-up was a **motivation to study** anatomy independently of the course material, so that when I started the practical, **I felt confident.**"

* Bolded for Emphasis

Discussion

- While not statistically significant, potentially due to low statistical power, those who took the mock practical trended towards having decreased anxiety, increased confidence, and feeling more prepared compared to their classmates who did not take the mock practical.
- Written feedback also showed that the mock practical helped motivate, focus, and adapt student studying.

Conclusion

- A mock neuroanatomy practical shows potential as a strategy for reducing anatomy practical anxiety and addressing neurophobia.
- To validate this application of mock practicals, we plan to increase the statistical power of our study by repeating this study next year with the incoming class.

For references and more student comments, scan this QR code:

