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Tackling Colourism in India Through an Online Course for Public Health Professionals

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Illustration by Tanvi Bhat

BACKGROUND

- Colourism is pervasive, prejudicial, preferential treatment based on skin shade
- Gives rise to predatory advertising for harmful skin-lightening products
- Colourism worsens health inequities
- There is a lack of evaluated educational interventions for health professionals working with adolescents to counter colourist appearance ideals through advocacy
- Case-method teaching is a useful methodology to teach strategic storytelling for public health advocacy and fosters:
 - Teamwork
 - Student-centered active learning
 - Problem-based learning
 - Higher retention

AIMS

<p>(1) Increase knowledge of and concern for the seriousness of skin shade discrimination and use of skin-lightening products</p>	<p>(2) Increase understanding of storytelling-based communication techniques for public health promotion</p>	<p>(3) Increase intentions to use strategic storytelling and media advocacy for social change</p>
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METHODS

Adult health professionals who work with youth in India were recruited in fall 2021 through Monk Prayogshala, an India-based community organization.

Of those who completed the registration and pre-course survey, 25 completed all e-course activities and post-course survey and thus comprised the analytic sample.

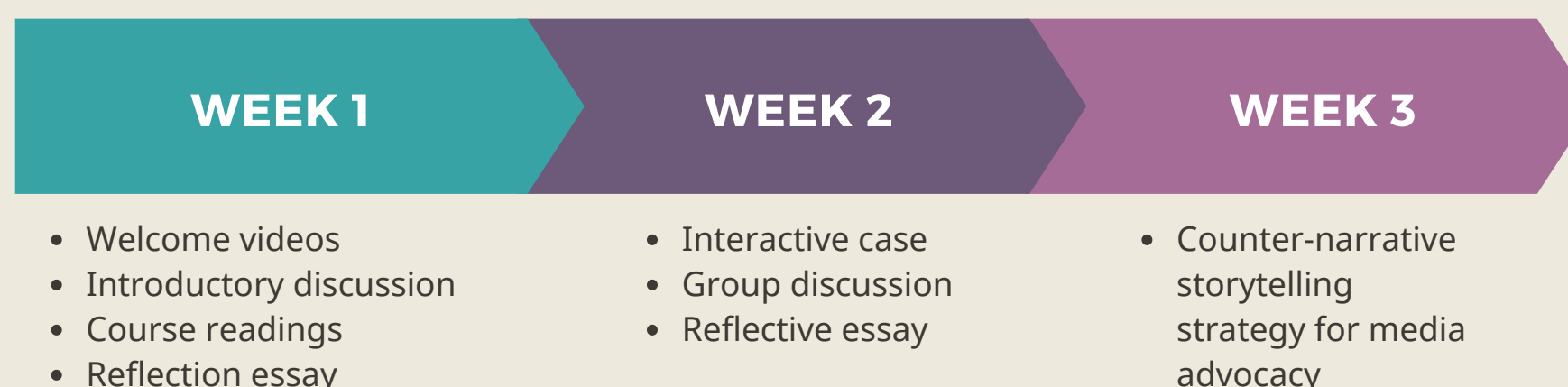
Participant Survey Components

PARTICIPANT ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- Knowledge of and concern for skin shade discrimination and use of skin-lightening products
- Strategic storytelling questions
- Suggestions for future iterations of e-course

ONLINE SURVEY ENGAGEMENT SCALE

- Observation learning behavior
- Application learning behavior



RESULTS

Changes in Knowledge and Concern

1. It is important for physicians and nurses working with children and adolescents to learn about skin-lightening products.
2. I am likely to discuss the harmful effects of colourism and skin-lightening products with youth in my family or community in the next three months.
3. Public health practitioners should use storytelling-based communication techniques to address health issues.
4. I am likely to seek out opportunities to learn more about storytelling-based communications in public health.
5. Colourism and use of skin-lightening products do not have much relevance to public health.
6. Mental health clinicians should not be too concerned if young people use skin-lightening products.

Changes Over Time in Outcomes Among Learners in India Enrolled in an e-Course to Increase Knowledge Surrounding Colourism



Learning Experiences



CONCLUSIONS

- Learners generally agreed that the course materials and activities were useful and informative.
- They were likely to use the technical readings on storytelling for change-making.
- The short films helped with increasing the value of visual storytelling.



Illustration by Tanvi Bhat

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

More intersectional material

Learners wanted to learn more about how colourism intersects with gender, caste and class

More frequent follow-ups and peer interactions

Checking in with learners through different modalities and promoting informal learning experiences

Translation to local and national languages

Exploring translations in Hindi and local languages

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This e-course was developed for the Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders by Reena Agrawal, Suman Ambwani, S. Bryn Austin, Tanvi Bhat, Nadia Craddock, Tania Lee, Deepa Manjanatha, Ayesha McAdams-Mahmoud, Amanda Raffoul, Monique Santoso, Kritika Tiwari, and Megan Johnston/Bloom Learning Designs. The case narrative was written by Reena Agrawal and the illustrations were created by Tanvi Bhat. Brief animated films were created by Medical Aid Films (Jemma Gander, Sheida Kiran, Louise Orton, Catherine McCarthy, and Claire Winter) with guidance from Reena Agrawal, S. Bryn Austin, Vinni Bhandari, Tanvi Bhat, and Monique Santoso.

Support for this work has been provided by the Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders and the Harvard Initiative for Learning and Teaching. S. Bryn Austin is supported by training grant T76-MC-00001 from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, US Department of Health and Human Services. Support for the brief animated films was provided by Anisa S. Bhandari. Pilot study participant remuneration provided by Body Positive Peers, an Amazon global affinity group.