

Implementing the Pediatric Approach to Trauma, Treatment and Resilience (PATTeR) Program for Medical Students (Work in Progress)

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Background

Trauma refers to an individual's experience of harmful or life-threatening events that result in lasting adverse effects on their mental, physical, emotional, social, or spiritual well-being.¹ Trauma-informed care (TIC) recognizes trauma's risk factors and its wide-ranging effects on child health and development.² TIC shifts providers from deficit-based views toward fostering relational health to buffer the adverse effects of trauma.³ The Pediatric Approach to Trauma, Treatment, and Resilience (PATTeR) is a national AAP-led collaboration training healthcare providers to identify and improve outcomes for children affected by trauma.⁴ The PATTeR Level 1 (Trauma Aware) content was successfully adapted for resident pediatric trainees, with pre and post surveys showing a statistically significant improvement in proficiency in all 19 course concepts.⁵ Medical schools have also begun to implement TIC into their medical curriculum, with the majority of studies reporting significant gains in students' knowledge of TIC principles and confidence or competence to perform TIC skills.^{6,7,8} However, few studies have explored applying the PATTeR TIC curriculum for medical students. Building on the success of PATTeR content for residents, our work-in-progress aims to implement the national PATTeR curriculum specifically for medical students.

Project Description

This project evaluates the impact of delivering the PATTeR curriculum to medical students during a formative stage of clinical identity development. To prepare students for increasing patient-facing responsibilities, the curriculum is condensed to emphasize foundational TIC concepts such as toxic stress, the affiliate response, and resilience. Led by student facilitators prepared via an AAP "Train the Trainer" session, the multi-modal workshop features a two-hour lecture and case-based discussions utilizing two primary frameworks: (a) the FRAYED framework for identifying trauma symptoms and (b) the THREADS model for fostering resilience. Following the modules, participants engage in a 30-minute structured debrief. To evaluate program efficacy, students complete pre- and post-intervention surveys assessing confidence in delivering TIC and readiness to provide anticipatory guidance. Our training is scheduled for March 12, 2026. Thus, our results are incomplete as of today but will be finalized by April 18, 2026.

Discussion

This initiative establishes a peer-led pathway for early TIC engagement by translating an evidence-supported training program into a student-centered format. By refining the PATTeR curriculum into a 2.5 hour workshop, we enable students to recognize how adversity manifests in clinical presentations and how toxic stress influences health and behavior across the lifespan. Early exposure to standardized frameworks like FRAYED and THREADS strengthens the trauma-informed lens of future physicians, promoting holistic care. Such training equips learners to serve as effective advocates, empowering them to identify trauma while actively fostering patient resilience and self-efficacy.

Conclusion

Implementing the PATTeR curriculum addresses a critical need for standardized, accessible, trauma-informed training for medical students. By utilizing a peer-led model, this intervention aims to effectively synthesize TIC principles into a condensed, high-impact workshop. Future directions include making this a longitudinal program that adapts based on student feedback and, if effective, expanding it to other medical schools to strengthen trauma-informed care across diverse communities.

References

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Speaker Bio

Sofia Santos is a second-year medical student at UC Riverside, School of Medicine. Raised in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles and shaped by her Guatemalan and Mexican heritage, she became interested in medicine after witnessing how cultural and structural barriers influence health outcomes for families like her own. Her dedication to child advocacy and pathway development is reflected in her current roles as President of the Pediatric Interest Group and Co-Mentorship Chair for the Latinx Medical Student Association (LMSA). As a Healthcare Leadership Program participant, Sofia is refining her skills in program design to become a leader dedicated to advancing culturally responsive pediatric care and trauma-informed advocacy.