

# Who Has Time for Stress? Exploring Student Stress and Its Relationship to Student Time Use

## BACKGROUND

- Pharmacy students have a high level of stress<sup>1</sup>; however, more information is needed to understand what contributes to this student stress.
- Increased perceived stress has been shown to be a strong predictor of emotional exhaustion and lack of accomplishment, indicating need for increased understanding of student stress and how to manage this stress.<sup>2</sup>

*The purpose of this study was to explore causes of stress in pharmacy students.*

## METHODS

Student volunteers (n=16) across PY1-PY3 academic years participated in semi-structured focus groups.

Students were prompted to reflect on and discuss stressors related to specific time use categories generated from the literature<sup>3</sup>:

- Academic Time
- Co-curricular Time
- Time Spent Working for Pay
- Social Time

Further, students were asked to describe how effective or ineffective their current coping methods were in managing their stress.

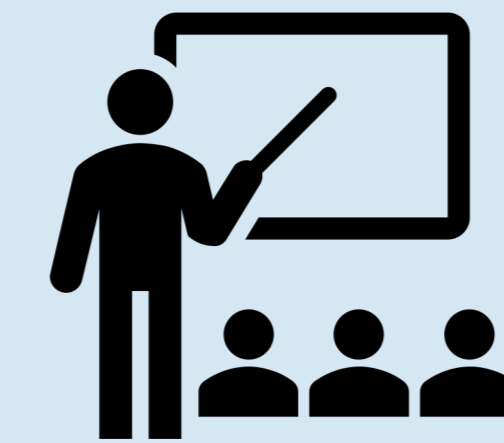
Focus groups were separated by class year (i.e., PY1, PY2, and PY3) to allow for further analysis regarding potential differences in classes.

### Data Analysis

- Inductive coding was used to identify themes among student stressors and coping methods.
- Codebook and themes were used to construct comprehensive summaries that reflected the opinions and experiences of student participants.

## FINDINGS

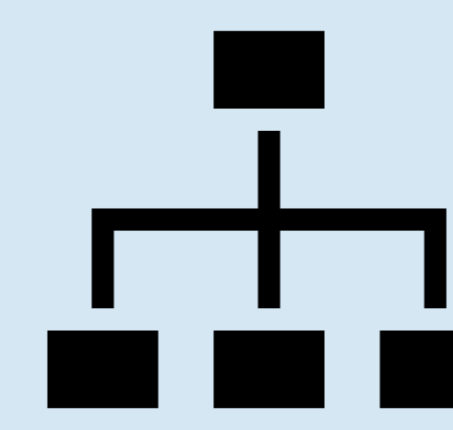
### Time Use Categories Associated Primarily with Increased Stress



#### Academic

*"I definitely think that academics are my number one stressor in my life"*

*"The virtual environment has made it very easy to sit at your desk all day long...even though that's probably not the best for you"*



#### Co-Curricular

*"I get overwhelmed thinking about, wow, I have like 4 hours of meetings today. That's a lot. How am I going to fit everything else in outside of that time?"*

*"I think some if it's related to COVID....we have had to delay our planning so much and I know that that's been stressful for everyone"*



#### Work for Pay

*"If I'm working all day the day before an exam, that really stresses me out"*

*"I don't feel like I have a social time on the weekends [because of my job]...I essentially go to work, come home, and try to do as much [school]work as I can, and go to bed"*

### Time Use Categories Associated Primarily with Decreased Stress



#### Social

*"When I have the chance to be social, my stress immediately flies out the door. Which is awesome. I love that. I love seeing my friends or talking to my family"*

*"I don't think I realized how much it [social time] helped me until all this COVID stuff... We can't really travel right now or hang out with friends...So I think I took it for granted before and didn't realize how much it helped me"*

### Student Stress Coping Strategies

#### Effective

*"I would say for me exercise is the biggest stress reliever that I use and I feel like I can like notice a difference throughout the day"*

*"I know things that help with stress in my life. I like exercise. I also like to meditate, and I find that those things helped me, but sometimes they're harder for me to schedule in my life when I have other things on my to do list"*

#### Ineffective

*"But when I get actually overwhelmed or stressed out I don't have a good coping method. And I think that's really highlighted this last week [participating in the study]"*

## DISCUSSION

- Across academic, co-curricular, and work for pay categories, many students associated increased stress with feeling like they had too little time to complete everything required, and that they found it difficult to determine how they should prioritize their time amongst responsibilities.
- COVID-19 was noted to increase stress related to academics due to the virtual learning environment as well as increase stress related to co-curriculars due to the unexpected nature of COVID-19 and its impact on student organizations.
- Social time use was the only time use category found to decrease student stress overall.
- Participant coping strategies included physical activity and personal hobbies (eg, cooking, golfing), but overall felt that their strategies were insufficient to handle their stress.

## Implications

- Students acknowledged many sources of stress and inability to consistently and effectively cope with that stress.
- Understanding sources of student stress and their stress coping methods provides valuable insight to develop interventions and resources to improve student stress and stress management skills.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### REFERENCES

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