

# CWRU SCHOOL OF MEDICINE OPIOID EPIDEMIC ELECTIVE

## Our Experiences and Student Perception of Harm Reduction



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### BACKGROUND

- The opioid epidemic is among the most significant challenges facing the upcoming generation of physicians
- American medical schools are beginning to acknowledge the importance of education surrounding opioid use
- Most schools have introduced educational reforms with the aim of providing information about the epidemic
- Clinical strategies focused on harm reduction remain underutilized due to lack of formal education on the topic
- The impact of harm reduction-based educational intervention must be better understood in order to facilitate a shift in medical education

### METHODS

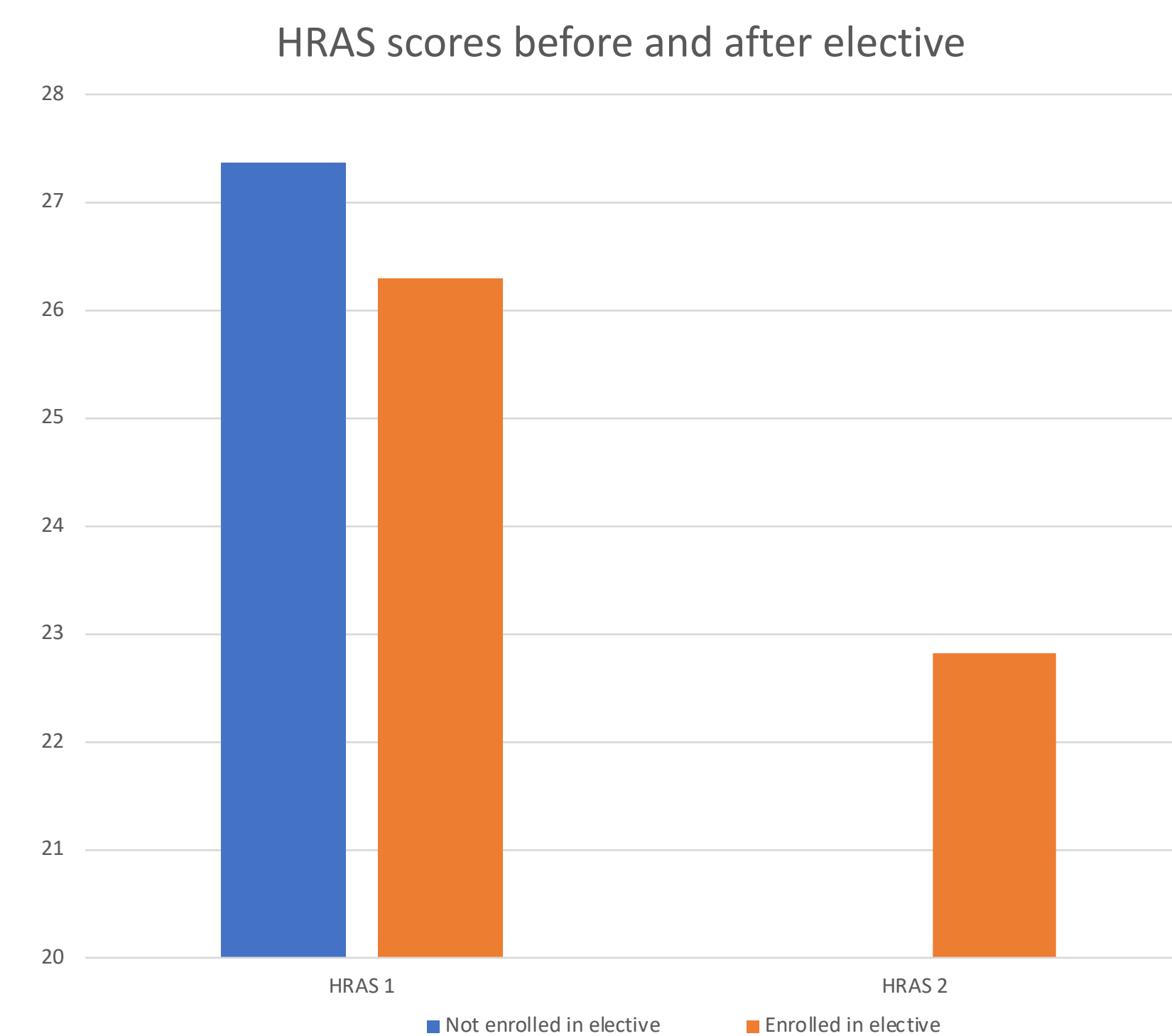
- An optional educational elective was developed in 2018 and offered to all medical students at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine
- This year, the elective was adjusted to meet the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic

#### Harm Reduction Attitude Survey (HRAS)

- Attitudes toward harm reduction were evaluated using the 25-item HRAS
- For the 2019 elective, enrolled students in the received a pre- and post-test HRAS
- Control group of students (first year medical students) not enrolled in the elective completed the HRAS once

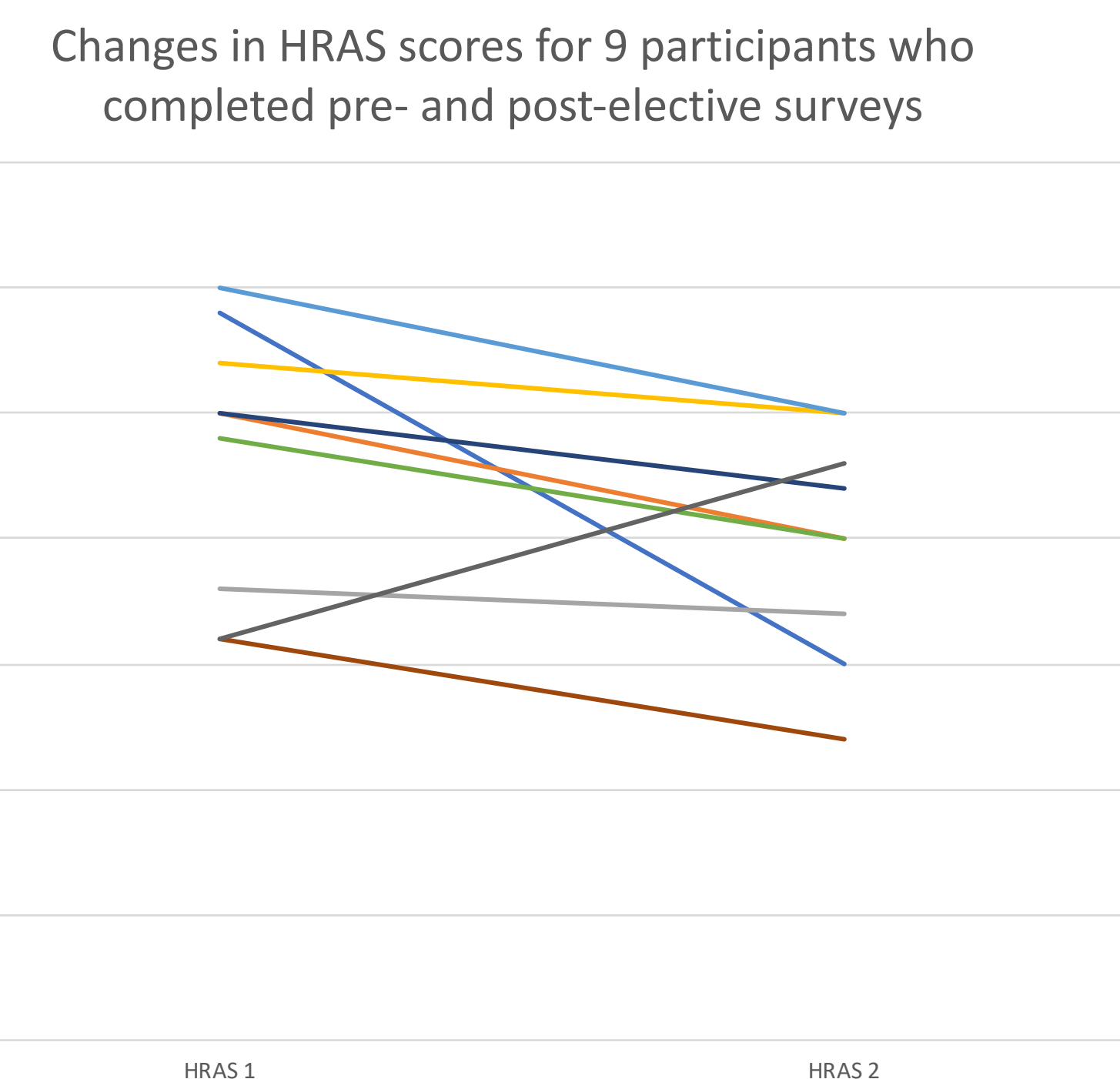
→ Attitudes toward harm reduction were quantified based on survey results and compared between the two groups for changes over the course of the elective

### RESULTS of HRAS 2019



- Forty two first year medical students completed the HRAS
- At initial survey administration
- Average score for students enrolled in the elective: 26.29
  - Average score for students not enrolled in the elective: 27.36

Average score for students after completion of elective: 22.82



- Attitudes toward harm reduction were measured on a Likert scale, with total survey lower scores reflecting increased acceptance of harm reduction
- Attitudes toward harm reduction for eight of the nine participants changed on average by -3.44 points

### OPIOID EPIDEMIC ELECTIVE AT CWRU SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

#### Opioid Epidemic Elective Sessions



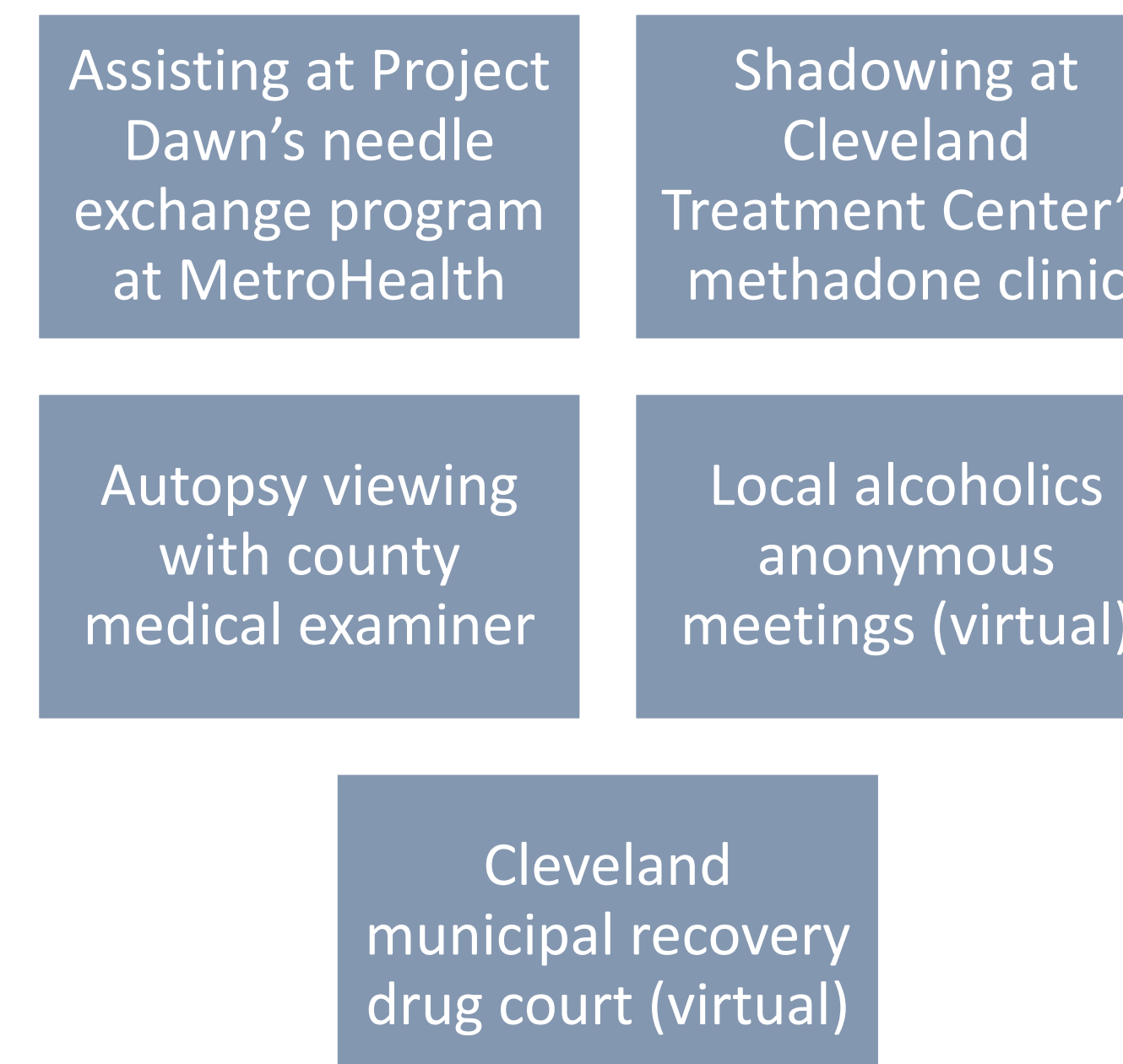
- Elective has been active since 2018
- Enrolled students completed pre-readings, attended weekly sessions, and completed community experiences to supplement in-class learning

#### Fall 2020

- All panels were virtual via Zoom
- Students completed two (rather than three) field experiences to accommodate social distancing
- Two new panels were added to facilitate 30 hours of total work

New Panels in 2020

#### Field Experiences



### DISCUSSION

- Our pilot study demonstrated that medical students' attitudes toward harm reduction strategies can be improved with formal education
- Exposure to harm reduction strategies during medical school may better prepare students to share such strategies with patients in clinical practice
- Our data support incorporating harm reduction strategies in medical school curriculum to impact future physician's knowledge and attitude toward these practices
- A more reliable measure of harm-reduction for medical students needs to be developed
- We advocate for future studies assessing if changes in attitude toward harm reduction impact clinical interactions with patients
- Despite challenges with in-person courses during the COVID19 pandemic, medical students were still educated on the opioid epidemic and harm reduction strategies
  - Additional panels were held during remote elective that incorporated family members and criminal justice personnel
  - These panelists will continue to be invited to future years of the Opioid Epidemic Elective
- The authors aim to re-start the HRAS survey method in future years of the Opioid Epidemic Elective when offered through an in-person setting

### REFERENCES

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