



CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR 2010 PROJECT SUMMARY

Name(s) Sharona A. Silverstein	Project Number S0323
Project Title A Longitudinal Study of Volunteerism and Attitudes in Pre-Dental Students: Year 2	
<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p> <p>Objectives/Goals This project examines the longitudinal effects of volunteering on humanitarian missions and in a free clinic on pre-dental students' attitudes. It is hypothesized that pre-dental students who volunteer will have more positive attitudes toward themselves, more caring attitudes toward others and will be more likely to attribute poverty to societal causes after as compared to before volunteering and that these attitudes in volunteers will be stable over time.</p> <p>Methods/Materials Subjects were 146 members of the UCSD Pre-Dental Society who completed surveys assessing attitudes toward self (self-esteem, life satisfaction, satisfaction with dentistry as a career, happiness); caring attitudes toward others (empathy, commitment to help others and work with underserved, poverty concern); and attributions for poverty; 65 completed the survey twice.</p> <p>Results Subjects were divided into five groups: NEW-HM and NEW-CV who responded before and after volunteering on a humanitarian mission or in the clinic; OLD-HM and OLD-CV who responded twice but were humanitarian or clinic volunteers prior to Time 1; NON-VOL who responded once and did not volunteer. Comparisons using paired t-tests showed that within the NEW-HM group and the NEW-CV group, scores on self-esteem, life satisfaction, satisfaction with dentistry, happiness, empathy, commitment to help others and work with underserved, poverty concern, and attributions for poverty to societal causes were significantly higher after as compared to before volunteering ($p < .05$). Correlations showed that the greater the amount of time volunteered, the more attitudes changed. Time 1 scores of NEW-CV subjects were similar to those of NON-VOL ($p > .10$) suggesting that volunteering led to increased scores at Time 2 for NEW-CV group. There were no differences between Time 1 and 2 scores of OLD-HM and OLD-CV subjects ($p > .10$).</p> <p>Conclusions/Discussion This study shows that volunteering on humanitarian missions or in a clinic leads to positive changes in attitudes. Pre-dental students who volunteered became more positive in their attitudes toward themselves, more caring in their attitudes toward others and were more likely to attribute poverty to societal causes. The more time volunteered, the more positive the changes in attitudes, and these attitude changes were stable over time. My hypotheses were confirmed.</p>	
Summary Statement This project shows that volunteering leads to positive changes in pre-dental students' attitudes toward themselves, caring attitudes toward others and attributions for poverty, and that these changes are stable over time.	
Help Received Parents bought supplies and provided useful comments, student leaders of the UCSD Pre-Dental Society helped with data collection.	