Introduction

Project ECHO® (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) is a telecounseling and telementoring partnership between MD Anderson Cancer Center specialists and providers in rural and underserved communities with the goal of democratizing knowledge. [1] Tele-counseling differs from telemedicine in the sense that it is providers training other providers rather than a provider to patient interaction. Because of the nature of this training, feedback on program efficacy must be measured regularly to continue to cater to the needs of the participants. With an ever-changing demographic of ECHO® participants from various health professions, surveys of participant satisfaction were used to gauge the effectiveness of the current educational program [2]. Areas tested by the survey included educational opportunities, overall program satisfaction, and the ease of translating information learned into practice.

Methods

A survey was sent out to all current ECHO® participants gauging satisfaction in the areas of education, overall program satisfaction, and the ease of translating information learned into practice. A range of responses was measured using a Likert scale of agreement. Chi-square tests of independence were used to find statistically significant differences in responses across professional designations. This statistical testing was used to identify disparities in program effectiveness among partners representing varying areas of allied health. Chi-square tests of independence were also run on the relationships between educational components and years of experience in gynecologic oncology to see if this was a contributing factor to the differences in responses.

Results

Overall satisfaction with the Project ECHO curriculum was high among all participating providers. Additionally, high requests for CME/CNE credits were seen through the responses of participating providers. Strong agreement with the importance of CME/CNE across all professional designations. Less representative designations such as RN’s PA’s, and CNM’s are not pictured, but displayed significant disagreement with the opinions of pictured providers. Differences in professional training proved to be statistically significant in relation to provider confidence and overall satisfaction with the ECHO® program, with the greatest professional differences being seen educational aspects of the program and the material’s translation into practice (p<0.01). Differences due to years of experience in the field of gynecologic oncology proved to not be a contributing factor to the differences noted by professional designation.

Conclusions

Additional educational opportunities will be offered to ECHO® participants to further improve participant satisfaction and participation. These materials would serve to reduce educational disparities due to differences in allied health training programs represented at these events. This initiative will be implemented as optional workshops preceding the Project ECHO® events. Additionally, CNE and CME budgets will be maintained to meet the needs of the participating practitioners.

References