

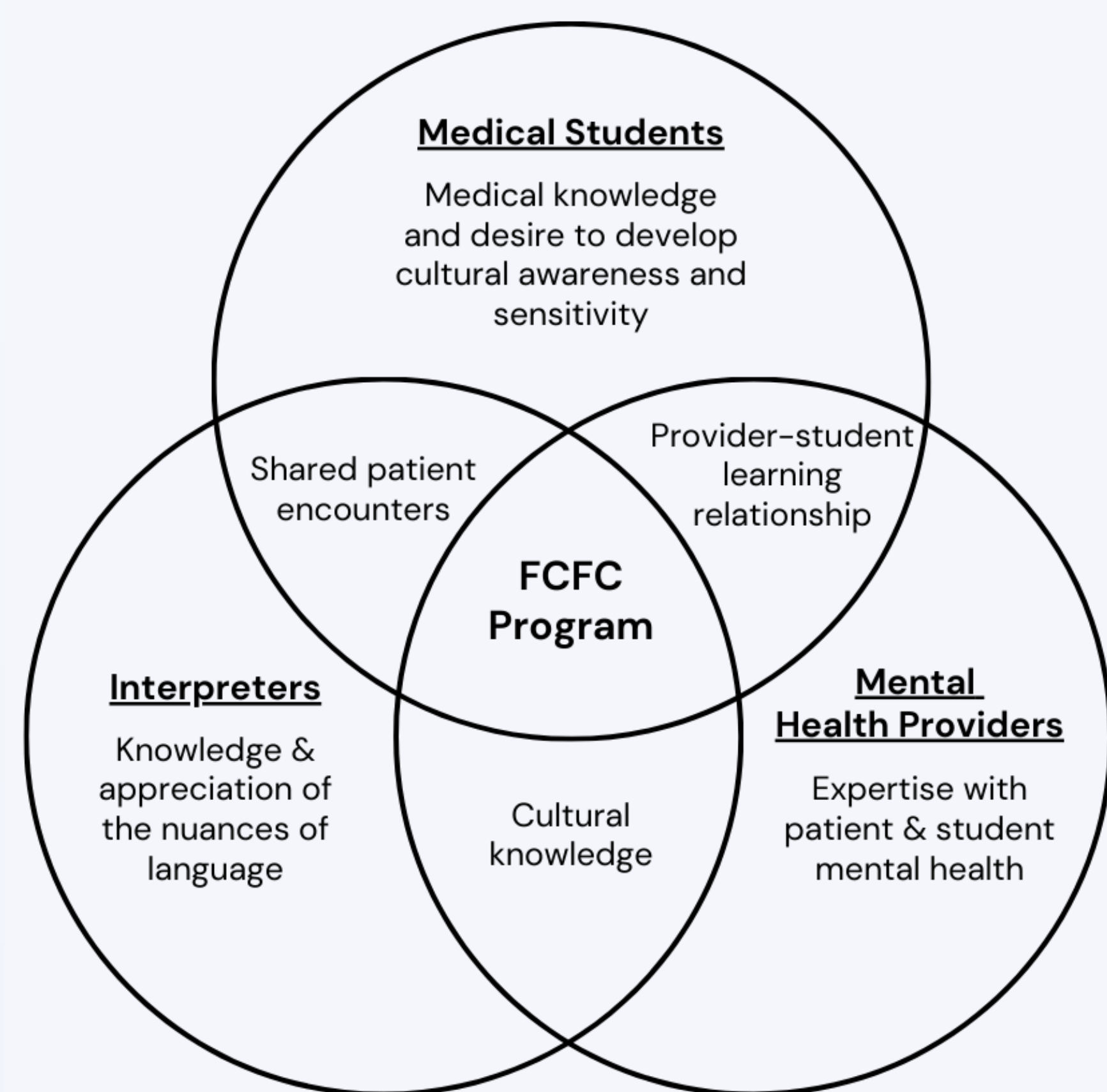
INTRODUCTION

The UC San Diego Student-Run Free Clinic Project (SRFCP) is an interdisciplinary partnership that offers medical and behavioral health services at no cost to predominantly Latinx immigrant families while educating medical student and interpreter volunteers.

Volunteers frequently find that mental health concerns arise over the course of other healthcare visits. These concerns appeared to be exacerbated by the pressures of COVID-19.

The ubiquity of mental health concerns expressed during healthcare amplified volunteers' desire to unpack these experiences. This would consist of building their comfort in navigating discussions about mental health in a way that honor sociocultural nuances, as well as processing encounters with emotionally charged topics.

Figure 1: Fireside Chat Participants



OBJECTIVES

To develop an informal space for SRFCP volunteers that would:

- Provide education on cross-cultural considerations when discussing mental health with Spanish-speaking immigrant patients.
- Build community among medical students, interpreters and licensed mental health providers across the SRFCP.
- Offer opportunities for processing challenging experiences that arise during care provision.

METHODS

Piloted monthly "Free Clinic Fireside Chats" over Zoom beginning in November, 2020

Recruited psychologists and LMFT's from the SRFCP's volunteer team to facilitate FCFC sessions

Recruited volunteering medical students and interpreters to participate while offering elective course credit for attendance

Introduced topics into the curriculum as a dynamic conversation between student interests and facilitators' areas of expertise

RESULTS

There have been 26 FCFCs, as of April 2023

Sessions follow a formalized curriculum that aims to address cross-cultural and contextual aspects of mental health among Latinx communities

Volunteers have created supplemental learning resources (see Figure 3)

Participant feedback has been positive, citing an environment that builds students' and interpreters' confidence in broaching mental health topics

Participants have also highlighted the value of FCFC's supportive network for emotional processing and community building

"It was really helpful to listen to other people's experiences because it made me feel less alone. As health care providers, it is important for us to talk about ways to improve our work environments and work-life balance. This is not only beneficial for us personally, but for those who we treat. Just as they say on airplanes, it is important to put on your oxygen mask first before helping someone else. You cannot give from an empty cup."

- Student Volunteer Testimonial

Figure 3: A Guide for Making Culturally-Sensitive Mental Health Referrals

Language to use...

Concerns
Worries
Preoccupations
Problems
Creating worry
Causing Stress

Language to avoid...

Psychological
Emotions
Symptoms
Depression
Anxiety
Diagnosis

Focusing on how patients' mental health is affecting them versus labeling or diagnosing

"How have you been feeling lately?"

"How is your family doing? How has work been?"

Work & family often intertwine with patients' wellbeing. Hardships faced by family at home or in Mexico can cause patients to suffer, worry, or seek medical care.

Figure 2: Fireside Chat Topics and Themes



CONCLUSIONS

The FCFCs have served as a place of learning, care coordination, cross-pollination, and mutual support that translates into greater student comfort and confidence when navigating mental concerns in integrated healthcare to predominantly Spanish-speaking, Latinx immigrant patients. This commitment to putting patients first ultimately brings together the diverse voices of the SRFCP to equip medical students and interpreters to address mental health issues in the context of primary care visits.