Qualitative Pilot Study: Interviewing Impacts of COVID-19 Policy on Four University of Minnesota Rochester Students

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Background
In March 2020, the beginning of Covid in the United States caused students to navigate through a new educational system of going online. To help control the spread of the virus, the University of Minnesota-Rochester (UMR) implemented a Covid protocol requiring masks to be worn at all times on campus as well as social distancing in classrooms [1,2]. In addition, many classes switched to an online format[3].

Methods
Conducted remote interviews with four participants from Public Health 3531. Informed consent was received to record the interviews. Participants identity was kept confidential. Interviews ranged from 15 to 30 minutes. Transcribed each recording to further analyze. Assigned coding to the transcripts (e. Masks, Social distance, In-person)

Research Objective:
To use qualitative methods to explore the experiences of UMR students impacted by mask wearing and social distance policy on campus.

HEALTH POLICY PILOT STUDY THEMES WITH PARTICIPANTS PHOTOS

Themes
- Lack of communication
- Prefer online classes during COVID-19 for safety.
- Dramatic changes in the environment that the students will be working in now.
- Approval of mask and social distancing policies will make everyone safer and put people less at risk of contracting COVID-19 from another person.
- Challenges with accessing extracurriculars due to organizational restrictions or shut-down.

Discussions
- Students overall had many opportunities taken away and their class formats switched.
- Students are in favor of mask mandates and social distancing guidelines
- Students would prefer to be in the classroom but know it is unsafe to do so right now.
- These findings show that many students share the same consequences of this virus and that even if they haven’t been infected by it, they still have been impacted.

References
- Carell, L. (2020, June 29). UMR Community: Face Covering Expectations [E-mail].
- (2020, September 7). Raptor Report: Vital Start of the Semester Info Inside! [E-mail].

Passage from interview
“I’m going to wear a mask. I’m not gonna be like, you know, I don’t wanna be patient zero at UMR and start a pandemic at UMR” - Anonymous