



ATTITUDE TOWARDS PSYCHIATRY AMONG NON-PSYCHIATRIC POSTGRADUATES IN A TERTIARY CARE TEACHING HOSPITAL

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ABSTRACT

It is a universal phenomenon that the stigma attached to mental illness and mentally ill is a major barrier in providing mental health services. Among doctors, the stigmatisation can further lead to decline in treating mental illness and compromises in patient care. Mental illnesses go unnoticed and unattended to most of the time.

AIM-To study the attitude towards mental illness and psychiatry in non-psychiatric postgraduates in a tertiary care hospital.

Materials and methods- This is a "Cross - sectional study" that was carried out among non-psychiatric post graduates in a tertiary care hospital using validated questionnaire among all non-psychiatric postgraduates

Results- Out of 235 non-psychiatric postgraduate's only 200 postgraduates have filled questionnaire. Out of which 88 were male and 112 were females and 168 were from the clinical branch and 32 were from the non-clinical branch. Data analyse was by using SPSS. Total scores were high on MICA -4 (56.99 ± 9.59) which represent negative attitude towards psychiatry. The majority of postgraduates have shown little interest in psychiatry in their MBBS programme and believe that functioning in a psychiatric setup is not respectful and have been reluctant to disclose their mental illness in front of friends and colleagues. On otherhand, they accepted that mental illness could be a treated and that people with psychiatric illness must have the right to live with dignity and not to be mistreated.

Conclusion- The present study shows the negative perception of non-psychiatric medical post graduates. It shows the urgent need to revise the curriculum and correct the negative attitudes of non-psychiatric post graduates towards mental illness and to instil and impart the importance of mental health among students right from undergraduate days. This would help in providing people with mental illness a holistic care for their problems.

KEYWORDS : Medical Students, Psychiatry, Attitudes, Mental Health, Hospital

INTRODUCTION

For ages mental illness is considered in our society as a taboo and people suffering from mental issues or illness are often ostracized because of their illness and discriminated by both common public as well as health care professionals^{1,2}. "World health organization" (WHO) concluded that approximately 450 million population is having some sort of mental illness, which attributes to about 14 percent of "global burden of disease"³. The prevalence of mental illness is high in India, which is also seen in commonly different parts of the world.⁴

Indian epidemiological studies report that 58/1000 persons are suffering from mental disorders and out of which 10 million found to be severely mentally ill, at least 20% of the adults suffering with psychiatric illness need psychiatric treatment but majority of these people with mental illness are either abandoned to suffer or kept hidden in fear of stigmatization and many of them are been taken to different magico- religious practices as it is commonly believed that they are to be either possessed by demon or cursed.⁵

Unlike other countries in India families and society play a central role in person's life, about 90% of mentally people are residing with their families. Beliefs and attitudes of family members have a greater influence on patients' treatment and their long term outcome.

Studies show unceasing stigma and negative attitudes toward mental illness and mentally ill people. Not only in common population but other medical professional mental illness is a farrago because of lack of knowledge about it and

popular belief or myths that mental illness is untreatable, last lifelong and that individuals having mental disorder are considered harmful for society or are not capable of functioning in area like marriage, job and often psychiatric patients have to go through violence, ill-treatment and violation of their rights.^{6,7} It's not surprising why in India rate of mental illness is underreported and fail to seek medical help, which affects not only mentally ill patients but increase caregiver burden.

It has been seen that mental and physical illness go hand in hand in about 15% to 50% of patients which shows need for consultation -liaison psychiatric services⁸. In India, there is less weight age given to psychiatric training in undergraduate medical and paramedical training programme as compared to other countries. This could have a potential impact on the way future doctor's approach and assess any cases of psychiatric disorders that they may encounter.^{10,11}

As per "World Health Organization" (WHO), positive attitude among doctors for mental illness is essential for quality care and further studies shows, the attitude towards psychiatry and related illness among medical students can be seen by many aspects that may be seen even before college admissions and also during entering a medical college for admission, and this also depends on the role of education providers.

Previous studies enlightened the fact that opinion of general public was often influenced by doctors and medical students. However majority of them were found to be having negative attitude^{12,13}.

Day by day increasing incidence of mental illness requires successful utilization of consultation-liaison psychiatric services as a means of improving mental health services. However, it relies almost exclusively, on the close collaboration of colleagues working in the various other specialties. In spite of it very few studies have been done on assessment of non-psychiatric postgraduates' attitude towards psychiatry. It is necessary to evaluate their attitude toward mental illness, to genuinely reduce stigma and increase awareness among them about mental illnesses. The aim of this study is to assess the attitude of Non-psychiatric postgraduates towards mental illness and psychiatry in a tertiary care teaching hospital

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional study done to assess the knowledge, perception and attitude of non-psychiatric Postgraduates toward psychiatry and psychiatry disorders was conducted at SRM Medical College and hospital kattankulathur, TamilNadu following institutional ethical committee approval. All non-psychiatric postgraduate currently pursuing PG course from SRM Medical College, Chennai and who are willing to participate in the study was taken as a sample. Study duration was one months.

INCLUSION CRITERIA-

All the non-psychiatric post-graduates in SRM Medical College who are willing to participate in the study.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA -

Psychiatric post graduates and on-psychiatric post graduates only who not willing to participate.

Procedure -

online questionnaire including socio-demographic and MICA -4 items were sent to all non-psychiatric postgraduates via mail and WhatsApp following ethical approval.

Tool used-MICA 4(Mental illness clinician's attitudes) tool was used for analysis of attitude of non-psychiatric postgraduates towards psychiatry, all 16 items. Scored on a Likert's scale. The scale has 6 grade ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" with a high score reflecting increasingly negative perception against mental illness. For items 3,9,10,11,12, and 16 scale 1-6 was used while reverse score was used for item 1,2,4,5,6,7,8,13,14 and 15.

No limiting point is given by this metric, so it is hard to infer that there is a degree at which attitudes consider as negative. It is a continuous scale. The cutoff point was set at 56. "16 questions \times 3.5 midpoint = 56"

RESULT -

Out of 235 non-psychiatric post-graduates only 200 post-graduates filled questionnaire. Data obtained was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 20 (IBM Corp., IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, and Armonk, NY, USA). Continuous variable such as age and item scoring were expressed as Mean + Standard deviation and for categorical variable like gender and responses on Likert scale expressed in frequency.

Socio-demographic -

Out of 200 non-psychiatric postgraduates, 88 were males and 112 were females. Among them, 32 were non-clinical and 168 were clinical resident doctors (As shown in table -1)

Table 1-SOCIO DEMOGRAFIC PROFILE OF graduates		
Total no. of resident doctors 200	Male	Female
	88	112
	Clinical postgraduate	Non-clinical postgraduate
	168	32

Table 2: Number of non-psychiatric doctors responded on MICA 4

	"Strongly agree"	Agree	Some what Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean \pm SD
"Q1	28 (14%)	36 (18%)	40 (20%)	60 (30%)	28 (14%)	08 (4%)	3.843 \pm 1.731
"Q2	00 (0%)	20 (10%)	32 (16%)	56 (28%)	72 (36%)	20 (10%)	2.931 \pm 1.470
"Q3	12 (6%)	36 (36%)	48 (24%)	40 (20%)	48 (24%)	16 (8%)	3.63 \pm 1.42
Q4	44 (22%)	52 (26%)	72 (36%)	16 (8%)	08 (4%)	08 (4%)	4.523 \pm 1.593
Q5	32 (16%)	60 (30%)	40 (20%)	28 (14%)	32 (16%)	08 (4%)	4.386 \pm 1.191
"Q6	16 (8%)	60 (30%)	68 (34%)	44 (22%)	08 (4%)	04 (2%)	4.129 \pm 1.505
"Q7	12 (6%)	68 (34%)	52 (26%)	24 (12%)	36 (18%)	08 (4%)	3.984 \pm 1.575
Q8	04 (2%)	44 (22%)	80 (40%)	24 (12%)	40 (20%)	08 (4%)	3.64 \pm 1.550
Q9	40 (20%)	60 (30%)	40 (20%)	20 (10%)	32 (16%)	08 (4%)	2.84 \pm 1.709
Q10	04 (2%)	36 (18%)	40 (20%)	56 (28%)	44 (22%)	20 (10%)	3.803 \pm 1.041
Q11	04 (2%)	56 (28%)	52 (26%)	56 (28%)	24 (12%)	08 (4%)	3.245 \pm 1.64
"Q12	08 (4%)	12 (6%)	44 (22%)	48 (24%)	48 (24%)	40 (20%)	4.31 \pm 1.38
Q13	08 (4%)	16 (8%)	44 (22%)	48 (24%)	64 (32%)	20 (10%)	2.83 \pm 1.51
Q14	36 (18%)	28 (14%)	60 (30%)	28 (14%)	44 (22%)	04 (2%)	3.86 \pm 1.69
Q15	00 (0%)	20 (10%)	48 (24%)	32 (16%)	80 (40%)	20 (10%)	2.08 \pm 1.19
Q16	20 (10%)	44 (22%)	64 (32%)	52 (26%)	08 (4%)	12 (6%)	2.96 \pm 1.415
TOTAL MEAN SCORE							56.99 \pm 9.59

In the present study MICA 4 scale on analyzed attitude toward mental illness among non-psychiatric postgraduates, (table -2) we found that majority of postgraduates agreed to (Q1, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q11 and Q16) and shows disagreement in (Q2, Q3, Q10, Q12, Q13, Q14, Q15).

When individual mean score was analyzed we found that If they were suffering from any mental illness they will not reveal it out in fear of discrimination (4.523 \pm 1.593). They also acknowledge that health care professionals having greater knowledge about mentally ill patient than the family members or relatives (4.129 \pm 1.505). They strongly felt mentally ill persons are dangerous to the society (4.31 \pm 1.38).

Non-psychiatric postgraduates do not agree that working in a psychiatric field or as a psychiatrist is as respectful as other medical branch/professionals (3.63 \pm 1.42), similarly do not think mental healthcare professionals' areas are real as other health care professionals (3.64 \pm 1.550) and they feel more uncomfortable talking to person having severe mental illness (3.803 \pm 1.041).

Non-psychiatric post graduates prepare only for examination purpose and would not bother to get additional knowledge about it (3.843 \pm 1.731). They also think it is not necessary to do

a detailed evaluation of person with mental illness because they think its psychiatrist's work (3.86 ± 1.69).

On the other hand, they also show some optimistic attitudes towards mentally ill persons as they think he/she can recover and live good quality of life (2.931 ± 1.470) and they would not have any issues to work with mentally ill colleagues (2.96 ± 1.415) and they would also not use terms like 'crazy', 'nutter', 'mad' for description of their colleagues suffering with mental illness (2.08 ± 1.19). They will not follow instructions given by senior colleagues to treat mentally ill in a disrespectful manner and treat them as equal as other patients (2.84 ± 1.709).

According to them, it is necessary that health care professionals taking care of patients with mental illness treat patient's both mental and physical health. (3.245 ± 1.64) and if a person with mental illness have pain (physical complain, they should evaluate and not blame it to the existing mental illness (2.83 ± 1.51).

Statistical analysis has depicted that mean score of non-psychiatric post-graduate's attitude towards mental illness was (56.99 ± 9.59). This signifies high mean score suggest negative attitude towards mental illness among non-psychiatric postgraduate

DISCUSSION

Psychiatry and mental illness has always been a social taboo. Even the medical profession is not immune from stigma attached to it. It is often seen that, like common people, medical professionals also have a number of misconceptions about psychiatric illness and the branch of psychiatry and frequent misidentification of psychiatric illness due to lack of knowledge. As we all know in current scenario mental illness has become more prevalent, which shows need for this study. In the present study, we found negative attitude towards mental illness among non-psychiatric post graduates. Non-psychiatric postgraduates had fear to disclose about their illness in front of friends in account of fear of discrimination. Non-psychiatric postgraduates found mentally ill persons more dangerous and felt that the general population needs to be protected from mentally ill persons and found themselves more uncomfortable in talking to mentally ill patients than other patients and they also do not find psychiatrists as respectable as doctors in other specialties.¹⁴⁻¹⁷

In keeping with the line of our study, Richa&Naddaf¹⁸ showed the concept of seeing mental disorder among Lebanese non-psychiatric doctors and found that non-psychiatric doctor had negative perception towards mental illness but had positive view towards psychiatry and various psychiatric treatments.

Filipeie et al¹⁹ used a list of anti-stigma questions and highlighted the stigma towards mental illness. In addition, they also showed a negative mindset of health care staff residing in UK towards mental disorder. In the United Kingdom, a comprehensive review of 74 studies showed unfavorable attitude of doctors towards patients who used to harm themselves repeatedly.

Non-psychiatric postgraduates also have shown some positive attitude towards person with mental health problems as they think patient can recover enough to have a better quality of life. Robson & colleagues²⁰ showed a positive view of mental health nurses towards individuals who are severely mentally ill.

Non-psychiatric postgraduates have favorable views for working with colleagues having mental illness. Non-psychiatric postgraduates would also not use insane words such as "mad" and "crazy" to describe to colleagues about

individuals with mental illness. Non-psychiatric postgraduates would not follow instructions given by senior colleagues in treating individuals with mental illness in insolent way and treat them as equal as other patients.

As indicated by non-psychiatric postgraduates, It is significant that primary physicians and mental health professional should give equal importance to both mental and physical health of mentally ill, physical complaints should not be ignored thinking part of individual's mental illness. Mukherjee et²¹ al showed that medical students had lesser stigma with respect to junior doctors and senior doctors.

It is necessary to effect a change in values of attitudes and perceptions towards mental illness so that patients can get holistic care and proper treatment. All medical students and health care professionals need to be educated about mental illness, for which we may use different strategies for example talks, discussions and awareness sessions in the form of seminars and class. A recent study found that these three strategies can be used for changing the effects of negative attitudes toward mental illnesses: (i) education (which would replace the stigma about mental illness); (ii) contact (which challenges the public attitudes about mental health problems through direct interactions with persons having mental illness); and (iii) protest (which would suppress stigmatizing views about mental illness).²²

CONCLUSION

In the present study, negative attitude toward mental illness among non-psychiatric postgraduates was found, which demonstrates the need to create awareness about mental health among non-psychiatric postgraduates. This will provide better education and more effective communication skills to the future generation of doctors in handling people with mental health problems.

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