



AWARENESS OF MEDICO LEGAL KNOWLEDGE AND HANDLING MLCs AMONG INTERNS AND POSTGRADUATES : A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY.

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ABSTRACT

Background: Medical Legal Cases (MLCs) are critical in medical practice, requiring healthcare professionals to have a solid understanding of legal responsibilities and protocols. Despite the importance of MLC knowledge, the level of awareness among medical interns and postgraduates remains unclear. **Objective:** This study aims to assess the awareness and understanding of MLC-related knowledge among medical interns and postgraduate students. **Methods:** A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 140 young medical practitioners (117 Interns and 23 postgraduates) from Konaseema Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Foundation, Amalapuram, Andhra Pradesh using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire covered key areas such as the legal definition of MLCs, Legal implications of medical practice, Informed Consent, Documentation procedures, MLC topics covered in their Curriculum and awareness of medico-legal responsibilities such as Confidentiality etc. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and results were presented through pie charts to depict the distribution of responses. **Results:** The findings reveal that large proportion of interns and PGs exhibited significant knowledge in specific areas such as Informed Consent, documentation and legal responsibilities. Yet many of the interns and pgs were not confident enough while dealing Medico-legal cases. Majority of them suggested to increase the MLC knowledge in their curriculum. **Conclusion:** The study underscores the need for enhanced education and training on MLCs within medical curriculum. Incorporating structured medico-legal modules and regular workshops can bridge knowledge gaps, ensuring that future healthcare professionals are well-equipped to manage MLCs effectively.

KEYWORDS : Medical Legal Knowledge, interns, postgraduates, medical education, medico-legal awareness, curriculum integration.

INTRODUCTION :

In the rapidly evolving landscape of medical education, the acquisition of comprehensive knowledge beyond clinical skills is essential for the holistic development of healthcare professionals. Among the critical areas of focus is the understanding of Medical Legal Cases (MLC). Medical Legal Knowledge plays a pivotal role in ensuring that healthcare professionals can navigate the legal challenges that arise in the course of their practice. It encompasses a wide range of topics, from informed consent to the handling of malpractice claims. Now a days, as medical practice becomes increasingly complex, all medical practitioners must know about the legal implications of Medical practice. As future healthcare providers, interns and postgraduates (PGs) are often at the forefront of managing MLCs, making their awareness and understanding of these cases crucial for both patient safety and legal compliance.

Despite the importance of MLC knowledge, studies suggest that there may be significant gaps in awareness and preparedness among medical trainees. The integration of MLC into medical education has not been given adequate attention in many medical institutions. This paper aims to assess the level of knowledge and awareness regarding MLCs among interns and PGs, identify potential areas of deficiency, and explore the factors contributing to varying levels of understanding. By highlighting these gaps, this study seeks to inform educational strategies that can better equip medical professionals to handle medico-legal situations confidently and competently.

Aim :

To assess the level of awareness, knowledge about Medico-legal cases among House surgeons and postgraduates at KIMS&RF, Amalapuram.

Objectives :

1. The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the awareness of MLC concepts among medical interns and

postgraduates. This includes understanding key principles like:

- Malpractice and negligence
 - Informed consent
 - Patient confidentiality
 - Medical ethics
 - Medico-legal documentation
2. This study also aims to assess the level of exposure these medical professionals have had to MLC training during their education.
 3. This study also analyses Attitude and Perception of these medical professionals towards MLC knowledge.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY :

Study Design And Setting: This is a Cross sectional study conducted among interns and postgraduates in Konaseema Institute of Medical Sciences & Research Foundation.

Study Duration: This study is conducted for a period of 3 months from November 2024 to February 2025.

Sample Size: A total of 140 Medical graduates (117 Interns and 23 Postgraduates).

Sampling Techniques: Convenient Sampling.

Inclusion Criteria: Medical Interns and Postgraduates.

Exclusion Criteria: Consultants and Non medical personnel.

Confidentiality: All participants details were kept confidential and only summarised data was used for analysis.

Informed Consent: All the participants were fully informed about Study's purpose, their rights including Confidentiality and Consent was taken.

Ethical Consideration: Approval was taken from Institutional Ethics Committee.

Data Collection: Data collection was done using a Pre designed questionnaire sent through Online Google forms.

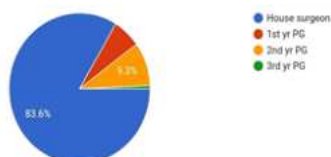
Data Analysis And Interpretation: Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the responses. Pie charts were created to visually represent the proportion of responses in different categories, providing an intuitive comparison of data distributions.

RESULTS :

A total of 140 Medical graduates (117 Interns and 23 postgraduates) has participated in the study and the results are as follows:

Year of Study :

140 responses



- Out of 140, 83.6%(117) were Interns and the remaining 16.4%(23) were Postgraduates.

Are you familiar with term MLC and it's significance in medical practice?

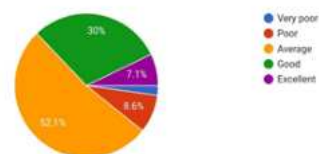
140 responses



- Out of 140, 96.4%(135) said that they're familiar with the term MLC and it's significance in Medical practice.

How would you like rate your awareness of Medicolegal knowledge?

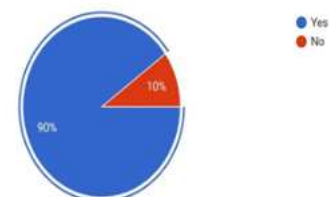
140 responses



- When asked to rate their MLC knowledge, Out of 140, 52.1%(73) rated their knowledge Average, 30%(42) rated Good, 7.1%(10) rated Excellent, 8.6%(12) rated poor and 2.1%(3) rated very poor.

Are you aware of the legal implications of medical negligence?

140 responses



- 90%(126) out of 140 says that they're aware of legal implications of medical negligence.

Do you understand the concept of 'Informed consent' and it's importance in clinical practice?

140 responses



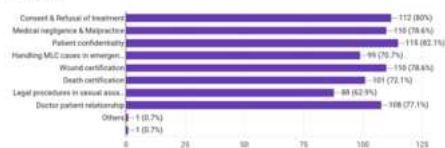
- 97.1%() of them knows about the concept of Informed Consent and it's importance in clinical practice.

- When asked about the Medico-legal topics covered in their curriculum, the responses came as follows ;

Which of the following MLC topics have been covered in your curriculum?

(Select all that apply)

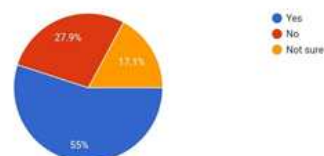
140 responses



The above table shows the topics covered in their curriculum. When observed majority of the topics were covered except for the topic Legal procedures in Sexual assault was slightly low.

In your opinion, is MLC education sufficient in your curriculum?

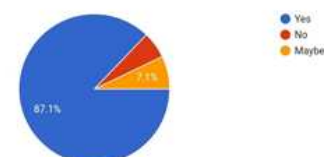
140 responses



- When asked about their opinion if the MLC Education is sufficient in their curriculum, only 55%(77) responded that it was adequate.

Do you think more MLC knowledge should be integrated into your curriculum?

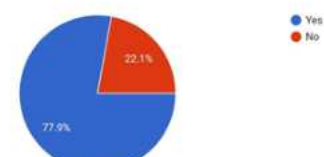
140 responses



- 87.1%(122) people suggested that more MLC knowledge should be integrated into the MBBS curriculum.

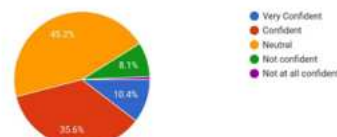
Have you faced any MLC situations during your clinical rotations?

140 responses



If yes, we're you confident in handling MLCs ?

135 responses



- 77.9%(109) of them said that they've faced MLC situations in their clinicals, but more than 50% of them were not confident in handling those situations.

Do you think Interns & Postgraduates should undergo regular training in Medicolegal aspects during their careers?

140 responses



- 90%(126) of them suggested that every Intern and Postgraduate should undergo regular training in Medico-legal aspects.

Would you be interested in attending workshops or seminars to improve your MLC knowledge?
140 responses



- 83.6%(117) out of 140 were interested in attending workshops and seminars to improve their Medico-legal knowledge.

DISCUSSION :

The findings from this study highlight that although many of the interns and Postgraduates have proper knowledge about Medico-legal issues, still some of them lacks MLC knowledge.

As medical practice becomes increasingly complex, all medical practitioners must know about the legal implications of Medical practice.

In our study of 117 interns and 23 PG students we noticed that PG students were more aware about MLCs than that of interns may be because they are exposed to more MLCs during their post graduation. This is in accordance with the study by Dash S.K. in 2010{1}.

Most of the interns and Postgraduates(97.1%) in our study knows the importance of Informed Consent as valid and important and this is in accordance with the study carried by Heywood R. in 2007{2} who found that 98% of medical students found Informed Consent to be important and necessary.

In our study 82.1% knows about Confidentiality with patient information. This is similar to a study by Hariharan S et al., at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Barbados (a tertiary care teaching hospital){3}, it was observed that 98% of participants had awareness about confidentiality.

Our study clearly states that many of the interns were unable to identify key aspects of medical negligence and still some of these can't even understand the significance of informed consent in Medical practice.

Even, when faced with MLC situations, many of these young Doctors are not confident enough to deal them. The low level of awareness regarding MLC is concerning, as lack of knowledge about legal matters can lead to costly legal issues, compromised patient care, and ethical violations.

The absence of structured and comprehensive MLC training in many medical institutions further exacerbates this issue. Despite the fact that postgraduates are generally more aware of MLC issues due to their more exposure to MLCs, there is still room for improvement.

Recommendations :

- Curriculum Reform:** Integrate MLC education into the core medical curriculum, with both theoretical and practical components.
- Workshops And Seminars:** Organize regular workshops and seminars on MLC topics, with guest lectures from legal experts and healthcare professionals.
- Case-Based Learning:** Incorporate case studies and real-life legal scenarios into medical training to enhance the practical understanding of MLC issues.
- Continuous Education:** Promote continuous learning on

MLC throughout the career of medical professionals through continuing medical education (CME) programs.

CONCLUSION:

The study reveals a concerning lack of awareness of MLC principles among significant amount of interns and postgraduates. To mitigate the legal risks associated with medical practice, there is an urgent need to strengthen the integration of MLC training into medical education. Institutions should prioritize the inclusion of legal education in medical curriculum and ensure that all healthcare professionals are well-equipped to handle the legal challenges that arise in clinical practice.

Acknowledgement :

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