



## ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALISM IN UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL CURRICULUM

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**ABSTRACT** **Aim:** To establish the role of ethics and Professionalism in the curriculum of Undergraduate Medical students. **Study Design:** A classroom study was conducted on 156 MBBS 1st year students. A questionnaire comprising of 15 questions was given to the students related to virtues like ethic 4 questions and Professionalism 11 questions, the answers were analyzed and their percentages were calculated. Results were tabulated and represented graphically. **Conclusion:** The need for teaching ethics and Professionalism has a reciprocal relationship in the formation of professional identity and professionalism acts as an essential part of its curricula throughout the entire course of medical education.

**KEYWORDS :** Ethics, Professionalism.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Ethics is the study of morality-careful and systematic analysis of moral decisions and behaviour and practising those decisions. Ethics has always been an essential component of medical practise.<sup>[1]</sup>

Medical ethics focuses on moral conduct and principles to apply towards patients, doctor-patient relationship and communication in the practise of Medicine.<sup>[2]</sup>

The fundamental principles of the Medical ethics are Autonomy, Beneficence, non-maleficance and justice.

Professionalism is the attributes, behaviour, responsibilities, principles and objectives that characterize a profession or professional person. In Medical profession, professionalism symbolizes the relationship and commitment of doctor to society as it forms the basis of patient-physician trust.<sup>[3,4]</sup>

The attributes and behaviour of professionalism include accountability, selflessness, commitment to excel, empathy, truth, admiration, sensitivity to the needs of diverse populations and adherence to ethical principles.

Thus professionalism is defined as the "habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical skills, clinical reasoning, emotion, values and reflections in daily practice for the benefit of the individual and community."<sup>[5]</sup>

The prestigious medical profession is on the verge of being a mere business. Professionalism in fading and today's doctors are facing value threatening problems. Many problem faced by doctors are due to non-professionalism. Mere education in the science and practice of medicine produces inefficient doctors. The present study was conducted to establish a relationship between the formation of professional identity, professionalism and ethics.

**METHODOLOGY:**

A classroom study was conducted on 156 1<sup>st</sup> year MBBS students. A questionnaire comprising of 15 questions was given to the students related to virtues like ethics {Table (i)} & professionalism {Table (ii)} answers were analyzed under 5 categories- strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and strongly disagree.

**RESULT:**

75 to 85 % of students strongly agree that CBME curriculum and AETCOM are helpful in attaining virtues of ethics and professionalism. 14 to 25 % of students agree and 1 % students remain neutral regarding usefulness of CBME and AETCOM in attaining knowledge regarding ethics & professionalism. None of the students

disagreed.

The above results are tabulated in Table (i) & (ii) and represented graphically in Fig (i) & (ii).

**Table (i):** Perception of students regarding the Ethics in doctors.

Questions	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	n	% age	n	% age	n	% age	n	% age	n	% age	n	% age
Importance in medicine	134	85.90	22	14.10	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	156	100
Made me more aware of practice in medicine	116	74.36	40	25.64	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	156	100
Influence on attitude and behaviour of doctors	130	84.62	24	15.38	2	1.28	0	0.0	0	0.0	156	100
Plays an important role in learning and self improvement	118	76.92	36	23.08	2	1.28	0	0.0	0	0.0	156	100

**Table (II):** Perception of students regarding the Professionalism in doctors.

Questions	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	n	% age	n	% age	n	% age	n	% age	n	% age	n	% age
Concept of professionalism and ethics	118	75.64	32	20.51	6	3.84	0	0.0	0	0.0	156	100
White coat ceremony	120	76.92	24	15.38	12	7.69	0	0.0	0	0.0	156	100

Be Properly dressed	94	60.25	569	35.89	4	2.56	0	0.0	0	0.0	156	100
Professional behaviour and alternative behaviour	106	67.94	248	15.38	4	2.56	0	0.0	0	0.0	156	100
Follow the Hippocratic oath in all circumstances	98	62.82	321	20.51	8	5.12	0	0.0	0	0.0	156	100
Interpersonal relationship	90	57.69	303	19.23	12	7.69	0	0.0	0	0.0	156	100
Working in a healthcare team	110	70.51	321	20.51	2	1.28	0	0.0	0	0.0	156	100
Students respect patient confidentiality (Privacy)	112	71.79	183	11.53	2	1.28	0	0.0	0	0.0	156	100
Learning	98	62.82	303	19.23	2	1.28	0	0.0	0	0.0	156	100
Stress Management	86	55.12	385	24.35	8	5.12	0	0.0	0	0.0	156	100
Time Management	96	61.53	321	20.51	4	2.56	0	0.0	0	0.0	156	100

Educators as students learn by watching their teachers as role models. Professionalism and ethics were previously diffused passively to the students through “The hidden curriculum”, where in students learn by watching their teachers.

The National Medical Commission, India implemented competency based undergraduate curriculum in 2019. This new curriculum includes teaching and learning attitude, ethics and communication skills (AETCOM) from 1<sup>st</sup> year to entire duration of training. The revised GMER (2012) and VISION (2015) by the MCI has also proposed professionalism and Medical Ethics to be an integral part of the undergraduate curriculum.

The attributes of professionalism and ethics such as values, virtues, attitudes, communication and empathy fall under affective domain of educational objectives. Teaching of professionalism and Ethics cannot be limited to a particular phase rather it should be a continuous, longitudinal step-by-step process throughout the UG and PG curricula. In the initial professional years students can be sensitized to the importance of professionalism and ethics using cases (real or hypothetical) followed by exposure to the clinical scenario by means of bedside teaching, video clips or any other appropriate teaching learning methods.

**CONCLUSION:**

Teaching Professionalism and ethics has the hospital to increase awareness of duties and moral responsibilities. These is a reciprocal relationship between formation of a desirable professional identity and professionalism acts as an essential part of its curricula throughout the entire course of Medical education. Introduction of AETCOM module in the undergraduate curriculum (2019) is making an impact and uplifting the image of Indian Medical Graduate.

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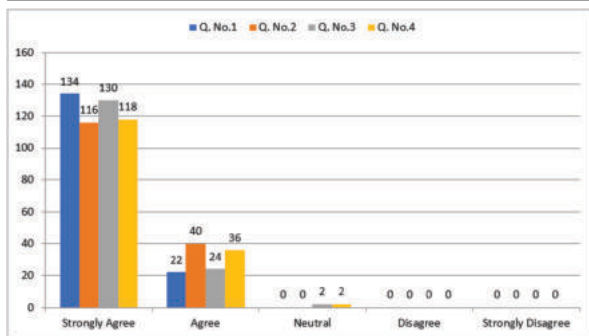


Figure (i): Showing Perception of students regarding the Ethics in doctors.

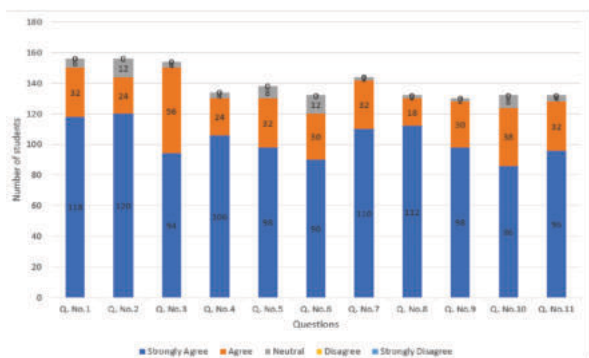


Figure (ii): Showing Perception of students regarding the Professionalism in doctors.

**DISCUSSION:**

“Professionalism and Ethics are caught and not taught.” Virtues of professionalism should be reflected in the behaviour of Medical