



## PREVALENCE OF STRESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL STUDENTS

### Medicine

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### ABSTRACT

Stress is common among medical students. the present study was undertaken to determine the prevalence and sources of stress among the undergraduate medical students of Tirunelveli medical college. A general Health questionnaire was used and the score was used to assess prevalence of stress. The stressors were identified using a different questionnaire.

It was found that the prevalence of stress was 43%. The prevalence was higher among final year students (52%). The study revealed that academic problems (44%) were the greatest source of stress compared to non- academic problems(21%). Among the stressors related to academics amount of information to be learnt was found to be the greatest cause of stress (54%). In non – academic problems home-sickness was found to be more common. The study provided insight for development of stress coping strategies among the medical students.

### KEYWORDS:

STRESS, MEDICAL STUDENTS, ACADEMIC PROBLEMS

### INTRODUCTION

Medical Education though respected in the society is stressful. Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demand exceeds the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilise. Stress is caused by an existing stress causing factor called stressor. For students who have been lifelong achievers in primary and secondary school, getting low marks on an examination during academic medical tenure is shocking(Kate 2010). Medical student's life is subjected to different kinds of stressors like difficulty with the amount of information to be learned. An optimum level of stress can lead to enhanced learning. However excessive stress leads to physical and mental problems.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

200 undergraduate medical students ( 50 first year , 50 second year, 50 third year and 50 final year) of Tirunelveli medical College were enrolled in the study. The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) which consisted of 12 questions was used for determining the prevalence of stress. Scores of 4 and above were considered to be positive for stress. Sources of stress were identified by asking the students to respond to a questionnaire which had items grouped under academic and non- academic problems.

### RESULTS

Prevalence of stress among undergraduate medical students in tirunelveli medical college was 43%. The prevalence of stress was found to (table- 1) 34% among first year students, 40% among second year students, 46% among third year students and 52% among final year students.

**TABLE 1: PREVALENCE OF STRESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATES**

YEAR OF STUDY	PREVALENCE OF STRESS IN (%)
First year	34
Second year	40
Third year	46
Final year	52

Academic problems (44%) were found to be greater sources of stress compared to non-academic problems.(21%).

Among the sources of stress in the academic category, 56% of the students had difficulty in adjusting to long hours of academic work and frequent exams. 54% had difficulty in keeping pace with the

amount of information to be mastered and felt the workload was too much.41% students said they had difficulty in approaching faculty staff, 38% of students reported competition for good marks and following the teaching language as sources of stress Among the non – academic problems 46% students felt homesick, 28% students stated that they didn't have time for recreation. Other problems included health problems financial matters and adjusting with peers.

Final year students reported a higher percentage of stress when compared to the other students.

**TABLE: 2 SOURCES OF STRESS**

STRESSOR	AREAS OF DIFFICULTY	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS
ACADEMIC	Long hours of work	56
	Frequent examinations	56
	Amount of information to be learnt	54
	Heavy workload	54
	Communicating with staff	41
	Competition for marks	38
	Following teaching language	11
NON-ACADEMIC	Being away from home	46
	Finding time for recreation	28
	Health problems	24
	Financial problems	20
	Accommodation	11
	Making friends	8
	Room mates	7

### DISCUSSION:

The present study confirmed the general impression that stress is common among medical students. The prevalence of stress in the present study was 43% which is higher than a study held in Malaysia where it was 29.6% (Yusoff et al 2010). But when compared to studies conducted among King Saud university medical students in Saudi Arabia and Isfahan medical sciences students In Iran where it was 63.8% and 76.1% (Hamza et al 2011, Sharifirad et al 2012) respectively the prevalence is low. A study among first year students in Melaka Manipal medical college, India showed a prevalence rate of 37.3% (Abraham et al 2009) which is comparable to our study which showed 34% of first years are stressed.

Our study observed the amount of information to be learnt as the major stressor which is similar to the study conducted in Surat (Solanky et al 2012). Heavy workload is pointed out by 52% of students which is comparatively lower than a study conducted in Botswana where 81% complained of heavy work load causing stress (Agolla et al 2009). Only 20% of students complained of financial problems. It is also encouraging to find that only a small group of students find difficulty in following the teaching language.

Stress prevalence is low among first year students. It is because first year students had just entered the course one month earlier and may still be experiencing the novelty. In addition most of the subjects studied during the initial months are subjects that the students have learned during their school education. Prevalence of stress is higher in the second year (40%) and third year (46%) and is highest in the final year (52%). In the second and third year it may be because of difficulty in keeping pace with the amount of information that has to be mastered. In final year, it is usually due to the intention to complete the course without any break.

### CONCLUSION

The present study reports the high prevalence of stress among undergraduate medical students. It also reveals that academic stressors play a greater role. So in order to make a good physician it is essential to implement stress coping strategies at the level of entry till the entire course duration

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