



## A COMPARATIVE STUDY REGARDING THE DIFFERENCE IN ATTITUDE OF INTERNS TOWARDS PSYCHIATRIC ILLNESS AND CHRONIC MEDICAL ILLNESS

### Psychiatry

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### ABSTRACT

Attitude of doctors towards a specific illness play major role in the care of patients. Internship, the final stage in MBBS training is important in developing attitudes towards different diseases. Psychiatric illnesses itself have stigma among doctors too. In our country there are little studies comparing the medical illness and psychiatric illness. In this study we tried to explore the attitude of interns towards Psychiatric illness and a chronic medical illness (Diabetes Mellitus). Total 136 interns who had completed their Psychiatric posting were included in this study. Medical Condition Regard Scale was used to assess the attitude towards the specific illness. The attitude of interns towards Psychiatric illness was comparable with the attitude towards Diabetes Mellitus.

### KEYWORDS

Attitude, Interns, medical illness, Psychiatric illness

### INTRODUCTION:-

Internship is mandatory before obtaining a MBBS degree in which students are exposed to various disciplines throughout their tenure of one year. It develops their skills in understanding various diseases as well as their own preferences and attitudes. This attitude has a direct bearing on the care of the patients. Patient care is expected to be good with positive attitude<sup>1</sup>.

Psychiatry is plagued by negative attitude<sup>2</sup> and stigma not only in general public, but also among medical professionals<sup>3</sup>. The reasons may be many including lack of objectivity compared to other chronic physical illnesses or misconceptions regarding mental diseases etc<sup>4</sup>.

There are very few studies which have assessed the difference of attitudes of doctors between psychiatric illness and a chronic physical illness<sup>5,6</sup>. It has also been seen that such attitudes towards mental illness improved with more exposure<sup>7</sup>. So it is more rational to do a comparative study assessing this attitudes on interns after completing their Psychiatry posting, as they are unlikely will have a Psychiatry exposure unless they opt to take it as a specialization.

Keeping this background in mind this study was conducted to compare the attitude of interns towards Psychiatric illnesses and a chronic medical illness for which we opted Diabetes Mellitus.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS:-

The study was conducted in the Department of Psychiatry in a tertiary care centre of Eastern India from December 2017 to November 2018. Total 136 interns who consented were included in our study. Those who have major Psychiatric illnesses, family history of mental illness and who had previous contact with mental health professionals were excluded from this study.

A predesigned and pretested semi-structured questionnaire was used to obtain sociodemographic details of the interns. The attitude towards psychiatric illness and chronic medical illness (Diabetes Mellitus) were evaluated using Medical Condition Regard Scale (MCRS)<sup>8</sup>[Appendix 1]. It is a 11 item, 6 point Likert scale. Data obtained were analysed using SPSS version 20.

### RESULTS:-

Among 136 interns 82 were male(60.29%) and 54 were female(39.71%). Median age was 23 years, majority belong to rural background (n=96) and were Hindu (n=106) by religion.

Table 1 shows the comparison of MCRS scores between psychiatric illness and Diabetes Mellitus. Only one item( item no 11- I prefer not to work with patients like this) showed significantly higher for Diabetes

mellitus in comparison with Psychiatric illness. Though no significant difference was found between overall MCRS score between these two conditions.

### DISCUSSION :-

In this study no significant difference was found between the attitude of interns towards psychiatric illness and Diabetes Mellitus, a chronic medical illness as depicted by overall MCRS score. It is somewhat contrasting as some earlier studies have found that attitudes towards chronic medical condition is better than mental diseases<sup>9</sup>. Though some recent studies who have conducted the studies after psychiatric exposure has found more or less similar attitudes in both medical and psychiatric disorder<sup>10</sup>. This probably explains the findings of many studies which have shown that attitudes of undergraduates medical trainees improves after exposure to Psychiatry.

### CONCLUSIONS:-

The attitudes of interns towards psychiatric illness was more or less same to that towards Diabetes Mellitus. This reflects growing positive attitudes of interns towards psychiatric illness after their exposure in Psychiatry.

**Table 1:- Comparison between Medical Condition Regard Scale of Psychiatric illness and diabetes mellitus**

MCRS item	Psychiatric illness (mean score)	Diabetes Mellitus (mean score)	p-value
1. Working with patients like this is satisfying	5.01	4.89	0.677
2. insurance plans should cover patients like this to the same degree that cover patients with other conditions	5.08	4.82	0.067
3. There is little I can do to help patients like this	3.78	3.60	0.510
4. I feel specially compassionate toward patients like this	4.55	4.48	0.677
5. Patients like this irritates me	4.99	5.13	0.808
6. I wouldn't mind getting up on call nights to care for patients like this	4.72	4.68	0.782
7. Treating patients like this is a waste of money	5.08	5.36	0.103
8. Patients like this are particularly difficult for me to work with	4.68	5.09	0.081

9. I can usually find something that helps patients like this feel better	4.76	4.59	0.320
10. I enjoy giving extra time to patients like this	4.72	4.88	0.271
11. I prefer not to work with patients like this	4.99	5.40	0.021*
Total	52.36	52.92	0.591

\*p < 0.05. MCRS-Medical Condition Regard Scale

#### Appendix-1: MCRS-Medical Condition Regard Scale

A, B, C, D, E, F

1. Working with patients like this is satisfying
2. Insurance plans should cover patients like this to the same degree that cover patients with other conditions
3. There is little I can do to help patients like this
4. I feel specially compassionate toward patients like this
5. Patients like this irritates me
6. I wouldn't mind getting up on call nights to care for patients like this
7. Treating patients like this is a waste of money
8. Patients like this are particularly difficult for me to work with
9. I can usually find something that helps patients like this feel better
10. I enjoy giving extra time to patients like this
11. I prefer not to work with patients like this

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