

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS REGARDING FOUNDATION COURSE FOR FIRST-YEAR MBBS

Physiology

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ABSTRACT

This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted on 201 first-year MBBS students (93 females: 46.27%; 108 males: 53.53%) who had enrolled for the first-year MBBS course at medical colleges in Maharashtra, India to determine their perceptions of the foundation course. The study was conducted using snow ball sampling technique, by administering a pre-tested and pre-validated questionnaire via Google forms. The mean age for female participants was 19.71 +/- 1.40 years and that for their male counterparts was 19.70 +/- 1.25 years. The gender difference in age distribution was not significant ($Z=0.053$; $p=0.957$). significant gender differences were observed in opinion on adequate peer interaction during the foundation course ($Z=2.841$; $p=0.004$); utilization of library and Internet facilities ($Z=4.300$; $p<0.0001$); awareness on research ($Z=2.015$; $p=0.043$); effective use of audio-visual aids ($Z=1.970$; $p=0.048$) and help from staff members in adapting to new environment ($Z=3.449$; $p=0.0005$). The feedback provided insights into problem areas with relevant suggestions.

KEYWORDS

Foundation Course, First MBBS, Student Perceptions

INTRODUCTION

From the academic year 2019-2020, the Medical Council of India introduced compulsory Foundation Course for First-year MBBS students to facilitate their smooth transition from high school to medical college, to create a period of acclimatization and familiarization to the new milieu and to provide a firm base for learning in the MBBS course and later in their professional career. [1]

The major components of the Foundation Course include: an orientation programme; basic skills module (Basic Life Support, First Aid, Universal precautions and biomedical waste and safety management); Field visits to Community and Primary Health Centre; Introduction to the concept of Professionalism and Ethics including sensitivity for gender, culture, regional and language diversities, respect for differently-abled persons; AETCOM (Attitude, Ethics and Communication) module; Sports and Extracurricular activities; and Sessions for enhancement of Language / Computer skills / Learning Skills. The Foundation Course requires sensitization of students to a variety of learning methodologies, such as, small group discussions, skills lab, simulations, documentation and concept of Self-Directed learning. [1]

It is believed that professionalism is effectively taught using role models. [2]

Medical students tend to observe and mimic attitudes and behaviors of their role models, who may be senior students or senior teachers. It has been suggested that "professionalism portfolios" should be created for each medical student and these portfolios should be used to map out the students development through medical college. [3] The data can also be used for rewarding students who exhibit exemplary professionalism. [4]

It is well recognized that doctor-patient communication is a teachable skill. [5] Training at the level of medical students helps in improving their communication skills. [6] To a large extent, the communication abilities of the doctor determine the patient's adherence to the prescribed treatment, patient satisfaction and patient's ability to cope with the disease. [7-11]

Medical education is reportedly more stressful than other professional education due to ragging by senior students, academic and financial issues, [12-14] and lack of information on how to cope with the difficulties faced by them. [15]

The objective of the present study was to determine the perceptions

of the first-year MBBS students who attended the foundation course, so that their feedback may be used to improve the foundation course for future batches of first-year students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted by administering a pre-tested and pre-validated questionnaire via Google forms to students, aged 18+ years, of either gender, who had enrolled in the year 2019 for the first-year of the Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) course at medical colleges in the State of Maharashtra, India. The chain sampling technique was used. Informed consent was taken on the Google forms. The data were adapted to Microsoft Excel spreadsheet (Microsoft Corporation, Redmond, WA, USA) and analyzed using SPSS statistical software Windows Version 25.0 (IBM Corporation, Armonk, NY, USA). The percentage of responses and the standard error of difference between two sample proportions were calculated. For continuous data, the standard error of difference between two means was calculated. 95% Confidence interval (CI) was stated as: [Mean-(1.96)*Standard Error] - [Mean+(1.96)* Standard Error]. The statistical significance was determined at $p<0.05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In all, there were 201 respondents (93 females: 46.27%; 108 males: 53.53%). The mean age for female participants was 19.71 +/- 1.40 years (95% CI: 19.42–19.99 years), while that for their male counterparts was 19.70 +/- 1.25 years (95% CI: 19.47–19.94 years). The gender difference in age distribution was not significant ($Z=0.053$; $p=0.957$). The maximum age was higher for males as compared to that for females; while the third quartile, median, first quartile and minimum value of the age distribution was identical for both sexes (Fig-1). There were no significant ($Z=1.910$; $p=0.056$) gender differences in place of residence before joining MBBS course and the opinion that the foundation course was well planned and implemented ($Z=0.512$; $p=0.610$).

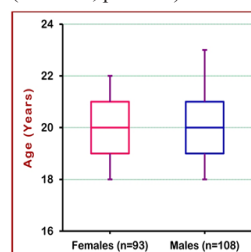


Fig-1: Box Plot Of Age Distribution

Table-1: Gender Differences In Student Perceptions

Parameter	Females (n=93)	Males (n=108)	Zvalue	'p'value
Aware about FC before joining MBBS	41(44.09%)	39(36.11%)	1.151	0.250
Adequate peer interaction during FC	87(93.55%)	86(73.63%)	2.841	0.004*
Explanation of FC provided before hand	61(65.59%)	64(59.26%)	0.923	0.357
Adequate training in communication skills	68(73.12%)	75(69.44%)	0.573	0.568
Adequate training in medical ethics	83(89.25%)	95(87.96%)	0.285	0.771
Utilized library and Internet facilities	73(78.49%)	53(49.07%)	4.300	<0.0001*
Adequate community health caretraining	75(80.65%)	86(79.63%)	0.179	0.857
Adequate awareness on research	41(44.09%)	63(58.33%)	2.015	0.043*
Adequate training in language skills	63(67.74%)	69(63.89%)	0.573	0.568
Adequate hands-on CPR training	79(84.95%)	90(83.33%)	0.311	0.756
More time required for hospital visits	78(83.87%)	94(87.04%)	0.637	0.522
Audio-visual aids effectively used	37(39.78%)	58(53.70%)	1.970	0.048*
Adequate time allotted for sports	68(73.12%)	66(61.11%)	1.800	0.718
Stress management training was useful	65(69.89%)	83(76.85%)	1.116	0.262
Staff members helped in adapting	50(53.76%)	83(76.85%)	3.449	0.0005*
Duration of FC was adequate	47(50.54%)	59(54.63%)	0.579	0.561
Experienced change in self after FC	54(58.06%)	59(54.63%)	0.489	0.624

FC = Foundation Course; CPR = Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation;

Z=Standard Error Of Difference Between Two Proportions; *significant

As depicted in Table-1, significant gender differences were observed in opinion on adequate peer interaction during the foundation course ($Z=2.841$; $p=0.004$); utilization of library and Internet facilities ($Z=4.300$; $p<0.0001$); awareness on research ($Z=2.015$; $p=0.043$); effective use of audio-visual aids ($Z=1.970$; $p=0.048$) and help from staff members in adapting to new environment ($Z=3.449$; $p=0.0005$).

In a Kolkata-based study [16] on 150 first-year MBBS students, respondents revealed that the foundation course was relevant (96%), comprehensive (95%), with knowledgeable teachers (98.5%), who were well prepared (96%), had good communication skills (98%) and answered their queries (97%).

According to a study [17] from Telengana state, students who attended foundation course opined that the foundation course provided basic knowledge and skills, that no changes were required, and that the facilitators had made the foundation course more interesting.

In another study, [18] students opined that training with the AETCOM Module would improve their communication skills with the patients (92%), help gain confidence of the patients (72%), useful for the students themselves and for future practice (10%), excellent method for improvement of diagnosis (8%), wanted multiple exposures continuously throughout the UG course (6%) and can avoid medico-legal issues (4%).

A Delhi-based study [19] on 129 students reported positive experiences with foundation course that included interactive sessions and simulation-based learning, team-building activities, college campus tours, cultural activities and yoga, and visits to

hospital and community outreach centre. The study also mentioned negative experiences of few students, such as, long college hours, long duration of the foundation course, parental separation anxiety, lesser exposure to the clinical side, inferior icebreaking activities, inadequate cleanliness in college campus and hostel, and the need for better physical activities and sports.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study reveal that the foundation course was well received and appreciated. It was opined that the sessions were informative, helpful, useful for students from different backgrounds to cope with challenges of the MBBS course with emphasis on importance of team work and good communication skills for success as a medical student. The feedback provided insights into problem areas, along with relevant suggestions, which would be helpful in conducting foundation courses for future batches of first-year MBBS students.

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