



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Psychiatry

ATTITUDE OF MEDICAL STUDENTS AND INTERNS TOWARDS PSYCHIATRY: A REVIEW ARTICLE.

KEY WORDS: attitude; interns; medical students; mental illness; psychiatry.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: There are still attitudes within most societies that view symptoms of psychopathology as threatening and uncomfortable, and these attitudes frequently foster stigma and discrimination towards people with mental health problems. Such reactions are common when people are brave enough to admit they have a mental health problem, and they can often lead on to various forms of exclusion or discrimination – either within social circles or within the workplace⁽¹⁾. Most people who live with mental illness have, at some point, been blamed for their condition. They've been called names. Their symptoms have been referred to as "a phase" or something they can control "if they only tried." They have been illegally discriminated against, with no justice. This is the unwieldy power that stigma holds. Stigma causes people to feel ashamed for something that is out of their control. Worst of all, stigma prevents people from seeking the help they need. For a group of people who already carry such a heavy burden, stigma is an unacceptable addition to their pain. And while stigma has reduced in recent years, the pace of progress has not been quick enough. Mental health is an ignored subject in the field of medicine and public health all over the world. 1-3 Medical students have neutral or negative attitude towards Psychiatry as a discipline and career choice. 4-7 Possible factors may be demographic or socio-cultural; influencing students before their entrance into medical school or during their medical school years. 8-11 Undergraduate educational programs are found unresponsive for psychiatric teaching in most institutions. Keeping these paradoxical issues in mind, we intended to conduct a study aiming to assess and compare the differences in attitude towards mental illnesses and Psychiatry among the medical students in different semesters and the interns undergoing compulsory rotatory internship⁽¹⁾.

Various studies done for attitude of medical students and interns towards psychiatry:

- Ajay Risal, Pushpa Prasad Sharma, 1 Seshananda Sanjel studied on attitude of medical students and interns towards mentally ill in Kathmandu University School of Medical Sciences and found that Overall attitudes towards mental illness and Psychiatry among the medical students and interns in their Medical School were positive or neutral. And stated that further study with medical students from different institutional background is needed to get a detail nationwide picture that can be implemented in future academic and professional practice⁽²⁾.
- Reddy JP1, Tan SM, Azmi MT, Shaharom MH, Rosdinom R, Maniam T, Ruzanna ZZ, Minas IH, studied on The effect of a clinical posting in psychiatry on the attitudes of medical students towards psychiatry and mental illness in a Malaysian medical school and found that an 8-week clinical posting of fourth-year medical students in psychiatry was associated with an increase in positive attitudes to mental illness and to psychiatry among female students but not among male students⁽³⁾.
- H. Baxter Swaran P Singh P. Standen C. Duggan, studied on the attitudes of 'tomorrow's doctors' towards mental illness and psychiatry: changes during the final undergraduate year. The method used for the study was that, 1-year follow-up questionnaire survey of two groups of medical students taught psychiatry in their fourth-year training by two different methods. One-year follow-up scores were compared with pre-attachment and post-attachment scores in the fourth year. 70 (68%) students completed both questionnaires at follow-up. The follow-up scores were significantly lower compared with both the fourth-year pre-attachment and post-attachment scores, suggesting that the positive change in attitudes following psychiatric training in the fourth year significantly decayed during the final year. The two teaching methods did not differ in the magnitude of this reduction.

They found that the positive change that occurs in medical students' attitude towards psychiatry, psychiatrists and mental illness after their fourth-year psychiatric training is transient and decays over the final year⁽⁴⁾.

- R Rosdinom, MMed PsychO, T Maniam, MPM*, Z Z Ruzann studied on does Clinical Exposure to Patients in Medical School affect trainee doctors' attitudes towards mental disorders and patients and found that Of the 83 students (approximately half the fourth year class) who were invited to participate in the study, 75 agreed to do so (90.4% response rate). Of the 75 participants, 48 completed the pre- and postquestionnaires (14 males, 33 females and 1 unknown). Twenty-seven questionnaires were incomplete and were excluded from analysis. Examining the whole group, they found that students had generally favourable attitudes towards psychiatry and mental illness at the start of their attachment with mean scores of 104.8 on ATP (neutral score 90) and 63.4 Gn AMI (neutral score 60). There was a significant increase in the mean scores of both scales following the attachment (ATP: z= 4.55, p < 0.0005 (Table 0; AMI: z = 3.75, p < 0.0005. Prior to the posting, males showed a significantly more positive attitude in the AMI scale than females (p=0.006) but there was no difference between male and female students for the post attachment scores of both scales. For the sake of clarity, the 'strongly agree' response and 'agree' responses were combined as a single 'agree' response and the 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' combined into a 'disagree' response⁽⁵⁾.
- Homayoun Amini , Saeed Shoar , Maryam Tabatabaee and Somaye Arabzadeh studied on The Effect of Clinical Exposure to Patients on Medical Students' Attitude Towards Mental Illness. In there study a total of 211 students participated in the study. Of these 115 (54.5%) were assigned into the old low-exposure clerkship and 96 participants (45.5%) were trained in the new high-exposure clerkship. The low-exposure group consisted of 72 females (62.6%) and 43 males (37.4%) with

an average age of 23.02 ± 1.86 years. The high-exposure group consisted of 43 females (45.3%) and 52 males (54.7%) with an average age of 22.70 ± 1.24 . Eighty of the low-exposure clerkship students (69.6%) and 71 of the high-exposure clerkship students (74%) responded to the questionnaires, before and after the clerkship, respectively. No significant differences were observed between the two groups in terms of mean age ($t = 1.43$, $df = 204$, $P > 0.05$). The gender distribution was significantly different between the two groups (Chi-square = 6.32, $df = 1$, $P = 0.012$). However, the correlation between gender and AMI total score or those of each of the AMI dimensions was not statistically significant ($P > 0.05$).

In conclusion, this study showed that employing a new psychiatry clerkship by increasing the exposure level of medical students to patients with mental illness could not improve the negative attitude toward mental illness. With regard to the highly favorable attitudes of the medical students toward mental illness prior to the clerkship, the effect of educational methods on changing attitudes could not be well explained. This highly favorable attitude which was observed in the current study raised the question whether the explicit and implicit attitudes of the medical students are the same. Further studies by larger samples of students and a real time measurement system are needed to distinguish between the real attitude and the conceived one⁽⁶⁾.

- Nimisha D Desai, Paragkumar D Chavda studied on Attitudes of undergraduate medical students toward mental illnesses and psychiatry and found that Median AMI score was 54 (out of maximum 100) showing a neutral AMI. Median ATP score was 82 (out of maximum 150) also showing a neutral ATP. The theme-wise analysis showed that the attitude of students toward psychiatrist and psychiatry branch was relatively better compared to their AMI.

Undergraduate students have a neutral attitude to psychiatry and mental illness. More efforts are needed to change the attitude to favorable side⁽⁷⁾.

Conclusion: Overall, assessing attitude towards those seeking professional mental health treatment is complex and cultural values must be included in order to understand the range of factors associated with attitudes. Drawing on the works of feminists, cultural theorists, postmodernists, psychoanalysts, and anthropologists have tried to explain the complex interconnection between illness, gender and culture in the context of mental health.

Overall, the doctors in inquiry did hold negative attitudes towards mental illness.

However, the psychiatric doctor group were noted in a number of instances to be significantly more positive in their attitudes towards mental illness than their non-psychiatric colleagues. In addition, a large proportion of the psychiatric doctor group had encountered stigma towards their profession, but it was clear that they have incorrect perceptions with regards to the extent of the non-psychiatric doctors' negative attitudes towards them and their profession.

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