



# ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

# Community Medicine

## A STUDY ON KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE OF MEDICAL ETHICS AMONG INTERNS AND POSTGRADUATES IN MEDICAL COLLEGE, BENGALURU

**KEY WORDS:** KAP, Ethics, Health care system, Medical professionals

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The rise in the legal confrontations between patients and doctors has become an issue of concern in recent times. Ethics teaching has been shown to have a significant influence on the professionalism and moral qualities of medical professionals<sup>1, 3</sup>.

**Aim and objective:** To study KAP regarding medical ethics among interns and postgraduates in medical college.

**Materials and methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among the Interns and postgraduates of a medical college in Bengaluru, India. Data was collected using self-administered, pre-tested, semi-structured questionnaire. Analysis was done using SPSS software version 21 and tabulated.

**Results:** Of 150 study participants, 82(54.7%) were interns and 68(45.35%) were postgraduates. 48(58.5%) interns and 40(58.8%) postgraduates have an average knowledge regarding medical ethics. 89% of interns and 92.6% of postgraduates have positive attitude towards it and practicing same whereas other remains neutral.

**Conclusion:** Different methodologies should be used to stimulate better ethical conduct in health professional.

### INTRODUCTION

As medical practice has been considered as a Nobel profession, eventually it has changed towards commercialization in the recent times and medical ethics is slowly losing its importance. An increase in litigation against healthcare practitioners is definitely an issue of immediate concern and may reflect in unethical practices by them. Instilling Ethics teaching in the beginning stage has been shown to have a significant influence on the professionalism and moral qualities of medical professionals<sup>1,3</sup>.

Ethics has been defined as "the moral principles that govern a person's behavior or how an activity is conducted" and medical ethics as "the branch of knowledge concerned with moral principles"<sup>2</sup>. The application of ethics to medical practice dates back to ancient civilization and even today, all medical graduates must swear symbolic adherence to the Hippocratic Oath. Codes of conduct and laws which regulates medical profession are laid down from time to time<sup>4</sup>.

Medicine professionalism connotes not only knowledge and skills, but also character, especially compassion and ethics<sup>3</sup>. It is a commitment to subordinate our self-interest to the interest of patients and thus forms the foundation of trust upon which our social contract as physicians rests, nevertheless doctors should not neglect the ethical conduct in such process<sup>5</sup>.

The rise in the litigations from the patients in recent years can be due to many reasons such as social, economic, professional and judicial. Medias playing a significant role in bringing awareness in public about medical facts and fallacies, professional accountability, and rights of patients in terms of information, decision-making and assessing outcomes and also reminds medical practioners to be cautious regarding their ethical conduct. Negative publicity in the media about the profession has done further damage which has led to doctor-patient mistrust and also have made way for false allegations<sup>5,6,7</sup>.

Doctors should be well aware of regulations and laws regarding their practice. Hence, this study was taken up to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice among interns and postgraduates in Vydehi Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Institute (VIMS & RC), Bengaluru, Karnataka

### OBJECTIVE

To study the knowledge, attitude and practice on Medical Ethics among Interns and postgraduates in Medical College

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out from July to November 2018 among the Interns and postgraduates of a

medical college in Bengaluru, Karnataka. Institutional ethic committee (IEC) clearance was obtained. Interns and postgraduates were briefed on purpose of the study, and requested to participate. They were informed that participation is voluntary and assured about confidentiality. The questionnaires were distributed after describing the purpose of the study. Informed verbal consent was taken from those who want to participate. Non-respondents were contacted after a 15-day interval, with a repeat request to participate

A self-administered, semi-structured questionnaire was devised, based on previous research studies and some questions were also derived from the code of medical ethics as laid down by the Karnataka Medical Council. The questionnaire was pre-tested and the necessary modifications were incorporated into the final questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire covered demographic information like age, gender. The second part of the questionnaire includes case scenarios based on their awareness of ethics and its importance and knowledge of the code of medical ethics of the Karnataka Medical Council; their attitudes on various issues such as consent, confidentiality, privacy, euthanasia, intimate examination and their current practice.

### DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis was done using SPSS software version 21.0 and results were tabulated. The collected data was analyzed by proportions, percentages and mean score with 95% confidence interval. The responses to each question were given a score of highest to the most desirable answer. Study participants were categorized into having good, average and poor knowledge; positive, neutral and negative attitude and practice based on the scores given to their responses.

### RESULTS

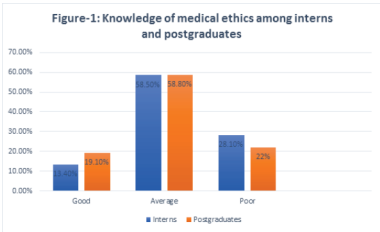
Out of 150 participants 82(54.65%) were interns and 68(45.35%)were postgraduates from different departments.

Among interns 11 have good, 48 have average and 23 have poor knowledge of medical ethics whereas 13, 40 and 15 postgraduates have good, average and poor knowledge of medical ethics respectively. Total 24(16%) of them have good, 88(58.7%) have average and 38(25.3%) have poor knowledge of medical ethics.

Knowledge of medical ethics among interns and postgraduates is shown below in Table1 and graphical presentation in Figure1

Table-1: Knowledge of medical ethics among interns and postgraduates

Knowledge of medical ethics	Interns	Postgraduates	Total
Good	11(13.4%)	13(19.1%)	24(16%)
Average	48(58.5%)	40(58.8%)	88(58.7%)
Poor	23(28.1%)	15(22.1%)	38(25.3%)

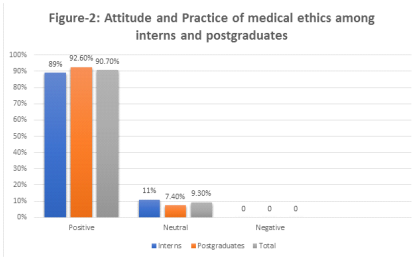


Out of 150 participants, 136(90.7%) have positive attitude and practicing medical ethics, among whom 73 are interns and 63 are postgraduates whereas 14(9.3%) are neutral about their attitude and none of them have a negative attitude.

Attitude and practice of medical ethics among interns and postgraduates is shown below in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Table-2: Attitude and Practice of medical ethics among interns and postgraduates

Attitude and Practice	Interns	Postgraduates	total
Positive	73(89%)	63(92.6%)	136(90.7%)
Neutral	9(11%)	5(7.4%)	14(9.3%)
Negative	00	00	



DISCUSSION

In present study, it is showed that 16% of them have good, 58.7% have average and 25.3% have poor knowledge of medical ethics and 90.7% have positive attitude and practicing medical ethics compared to a cross-sectional study conducted by Mohamed AM et al to assess the knowledge, perceptions and practices towards medical ethics of physicians' residents at University hospitals in Alexandria, Egypt showed that 18.0% of the 128 participating residents had obtained their knowledge from their medical education and most of the residents had satisfactory knowledge and 60.2% had satisfactory perceptions regarding ethical issues.48.0% of the residents were compliant with the principles of medical ethics in practice and 52.0% of patients were dissatisfied with their treating physicians<sup>8</sup>.

A descriptive cross-sectional study "Awareness of medical ethics among undergraduates in West Bengal medical college" conducted by Chatterjee et al to assess knowledge of and attitudes towards medical ethics among undergraduate medical students showed that among 322 participants only 10.9% were aware of an existence institutional ethics committee and 42.8% are not aware of its exact role<sup>9</sup>.

A questionnaire based cross-sectional study "KAP related to healthcare ethics among medical and dental postgraduate students in South India" done by Janakiram C et al showed that 98% of medical postgraduates are aware about institution ethics committee with good knowledge and attitude compared to 79% in dental postgraduates<sup>10</sup>.

A study "Knowledge, attitude and practice of medical ethics among medical interns in a medical college in Kathmandu" conducted by Ramesh PA and Yagya LS showed that among 46 interns 91.3% regard ethics, 78.3% were in favour to patients wish and 39.1% indicate paternalistic attitude<sup>11</sup>.

A cross-sectional study on "Knowledge and attitude of doctors on medical ethics in a teaching hospital, Manipur" conducted by Akoijam B S et al showed that knowledge was higher among those aged above 35years, who graduated before 1999 and having higher educational qualification<sup>12</sup>.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. Knowledge and attitude which is lacking among trainees (interns and postgraduates), should be strengthened to fill the existing lacunae in various aspects of medical ethics.
2. During bedside clinics, ethics relevant to case must be discussed.
3. Review on ethical cases presented in consumer courts on weekly basis.
4. Regular quiz, seminars, interactive workshops, group discussions, role play and case conferences should be conducted to stimulate better ethical conduct in health professional trainees.

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