ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Emergency Medicine

# TRAINING AND AWARENESS OF MEDICOLEGAL PRACTICE AMONG HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

**KEY WORDS:** medicolegal cases, health care professionals

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**ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Medico-legal documentation is a vital part of medical practice, ensuring the legal protection of both patients and healthcare professionals. Despite its importance, formal training in medico-legal documentation is often overlooked in medical curricula, especially in low- and middle-income countries like India. This study aimed to assess the awareness, training, confidence, and institutional support regarding medico-legal documentation among healthcare professionals, and to identify the need for structured medico-legal training programs. **Methodology:**A cross-sectional, questionnaire-based survey was conducted among healthcare professionals, primarily doctors, across various institutions including medical colleges and private hospitals. Data were collected online using a form with standard questionaries related to medico-legal experience, training history, documentation practices, and perceived barriers. **Results:** A total of 200 responses were received (majority doctors, age group 24–30). Only a portion had ever handled a medico-legal case, and even fewer had received any formal education on medico-legal documentation. Most respondents reported low confidence in preparing medico-legal reports. The most common challenges included lack of training, fear of legal consequences, and time constraints. A significant majority expressed interest in receiving additional medico-legal training and believed that such training should be mandatory. Institutional support was perceived as insufficient, with few reporting regular training programs or refresher courses at their workplaces. **Conclusion:** The findings highlight a clear gap between medico-legal responsibilities and professional preparedness. There is an urgent need to implement mandatory, structured medico-legal documentation training for healthcare professionals. Institutional support, curriculum changes, and ongoing training programs are recommended to strengthen medico-legal competency in clinical practice.

## INTRODUCTION

Medico-legal documentation is a critical component of clinical medicine.

Medico-legal documentation serves as the cornerstone of interaction between the medical and legal professions. It encompasses not just the accurate recording of clinical observations, but also their legal interpretation, often determining outcomes in courtrooms and inquiries[1].

The role of a clinician extends beyond patient care to include legal responsibilities such as preparing medico-legal reports, testifying in courts, and handling cases involving injury, sexual assault, poisoning, and unnatural deaths[3].

Despite this, there exists a significant gap between theoretical medical education and practical medico-legal responsibilities encountered in clinical settings[4].

In India practical aspects of medico-legal education is either minimally integrated into the curriculum or offered as a paraclinical subject Consequently, newly qualified doctors often find themselves unprepared for real-life medico-legal scenarios[6].

Several studies have highlighted that only a small proportion of healthcare professionals receive practical aspects of education or training in medico-legal documentation[8].

## OBJECTIVES:

1)To assess the level of awareness regarding medico-legal documentation among healthcare professionals.

2) To evaluate the extent of training received by healthcare professionals in medico-legal documentation.

3)To identify factors influencing medico-legal documentation practices.

4)To recommend strategies for improving training and awareness.

## METHODOLOGY

**Study Design:** A descriptive cross-sectional study.

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**Study Population:** Healthcare professionals, (doctors and nurses) including and working in hospitals and healthcare centers.

**Study Setting:** RAJARAJESWARI MEDICAL COLLEGE AND HOSPITAL.

**Sampling Method:** convincing sampling
Sample size – 200

**Inclusion Criteria:** Healthcare professionals' doctors and nurses

**Exclusion Criteria:** not willing to participate in the study and to provide consent.

**Study protocol –** preformed and validated 18 questionaries provided to participants and responses obtained offline as well as online mode. After screening, eligible data were analyzed using spss software.

**QUESTIONARIES:**

Section 1:Demographic Information
1.Age (in years)
2.Gender (Male/Female/Other)
3.Profession (Doctor/Nurse/Medical Officer/Others)
4.Years of clinical experience
5.Type of healthcare facility (Public/Private)
6.Have you ever handled a medico-legal case? (Yes/No)

Section 2:Awareness Assessment
7. Have you received any formal education on medico-legal documentation? (Yes/No)
8. Are you familiar with medico-legal documentation requirements? (Yes/No/Somewhat)
9.Have you ever prepared a medico-legal report? (Yes/No)
10. How confident are you in preparing a medico-legal report? (Not confident/Somewhat confident/Very confident)
11. Do you know the legal implications of improper medico-legal documentation? (Yes/No)
Section 3:Training Assessment
12. Have you received any medico-legal training in the past? (Yes/No)
13. If yes, how often have you attended medico-legal training? (Never/Once/More than once/Regularly)
14. Do you think the training you received was sufficient? (Yes/No/Somewhat)
15. Would you be interested in additional medico-legal training? (Yes/No)
Section 4:Challenges and Barriers
16. What are the major challenges you face in medico-legal documentation? (Select all that apply)

- Lack of training
- Lack of time
- Fear of legal consequences
- Lack of institutional support
- Others (Specify)

17. Does your institution provide medico-legal training or refresher courses? (Yes/No)
18. Do you think there should be mandatory medico-legal training for healthcare professionals? (Yes/No)
Section 5:Suggestions for Improvement
19. What measures do you think can improve medico-legal documentation training? (Select all that apply)

- Workshops
- Online courses
- Institutional training programs
- Inclusion in medical curriculum
- Others (Specify)

**RESULTS:**

**Demographic details**

| Variable | Estimate(n=202) |
|---|---|
| Gender | Male: 77 (38.1%)<br>Female: 125 (61.9%) |
| Profession | Doctor: 112 (55.4%)<br>Nurse: 90 (44.6%) |
| Type of healthcare facility | Government hospital: 18 (8.9%)<br>Private hospital: 59 (29.2%)<br>Medical college: 125 (61.9%) |

**Comparison of awareness and medico-legal documentation among doctors and nurses**

| Awareness | Option | Doctor | Nurse | Total | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Have you ever handled a medico-legal case? | Yes | 73 (65.20%) | 48 (53.30%) | 121 (59.9%) | 0.112# |
| Are you familiar with medico-legal documentation procedures? | Yes | 63 (56.30%) | 46 (51.10%) | 109 (54%) | 0.481# |
| Have you ever prepared a medico-legal report? | Yes | 45 (40.20%) | 28 (31.10%) | 73 (36.1%) | 0.189# |
| How confident are you in preparing a medico-legal report? | Not confident | 53 (47.30%) | 39 (43.30%) | 92 (45.5%) | 0.830¥ |
| | Somewhat confident | 44 (39.30%) | 39 (43.30%) | 83 (41.1%) | |
| | Very confident | 15 (13.40%) | 12 (13.30%) | 27 (13.40%) | |
| Do you know the legal implications of improper medico-legal documentation? | Yes | 47 (42.00%) | 49 (54.40%) | 96 (47.5%) | 0.090# |

| Training | Option | Doctor | Nurse | Total | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Have you received any formal education on medico-legal documentation in past? | Yes | 66 (58.90%) | 38 (42.20%) | 104 (51.5%) | 0.023*# |
| If Yes, how often have you attended medico-legal training? | Never | 46 (41.10%) | 44 (48.90%) | 90 (44.60) | 0.074¥ |
| | Once | 28 (25%) | 25 (27.80%) | 53 (26.2%) | |
| | More than once | 27 (24.10%) | 9 (10%) | 36 (17.8%) | |
| | Regularly | 11 (9.98%) | 12 (13.30%) | 23 (11.4%) | |
| Would you be interested in additional medico-legal training? | Yes | 91 (81.30%) | 83 (92.20%) | 174 (86.1%) | 0.026¥ |
| Do you think the training you received was sufficient? | No | 63 (56.30%) | 37 (41.10%) | 100 (49.5%) | 0.015*# |
| | Somewhat | 28 (25%) | 20 (22.20%) | 48 (23.8%) | |
| | Yes | 21 (18.80%) | 33 (36.70%) | 54 (26.70%) | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Does your institution provide medico-legal training or refresher | Yes | 50 (44.60%) | 41 (45.60 %) | 91 (45.0% ) | 1.000# |
| Do you think there should be mandatory medico-legal training for healthcare professionals? | Yes | 102 (91.10%) | 83 (92.20 %) | 185 (91.6% ) | 0.805# |

| Challenges | Doctor | Nurse | Total | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lack of institutional support | 12 (10.70%) | 8 (8.90%) | 20 (9.9%) | 0.132 |
| Lack of time Fear of legal consequences | 39 (34.80%) | 23 (25.60%) | 62 (30.7%) | |
| Lack of training | 58 (51.80%) | 59 (65.60%) | 117 (57.9%) | |
| None | 3 (2.70%) | 0 | 3 (1.5%) | |

**Comparison of challenges faced during medico-legal documentation among doctors and nurses**

| Strategies | Doctor | Nurse | Total | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inclusion in medical curriculum | 24 (20.40%) | 5 (5.60%) | 29 (14.4%) | 0.002* |
| Institutional training programs | 50 (40.60%) | 57 (63.30%) | 107 (53%) | |
| Online courses | 6 (5.40%) | 9 (10%) | 15 (7.4%) | |
| Workshops | 32 (22.60%) | 19 (21.10%) | 51 (25.2%) | |

## DISCUSSION:

The results of our study findings show that 53.96% of respondents were familiar with medico-legal documentation procedures, while 51.98% were aware of the legal implications of improper documentation. These findings are consistent with those reported by Bansal et al. (2019), who observed a comparable awareness level of 58% among junior doctors and interns in North India [12].in a recent study by Mahajan et al. (2020) reported a lower awareness rate of 42.7% in a similar population. Compared to their data, our results are somewhat more optimistic, potentially due to greater exposure or institutional policies that encourage medico-legal familiarity [13].

In our study of 51.49% of respondents having received formal education and training in medico-legal documentation. In contract to study done by Ahmed et al. (2018) from where structured training and higher awareness accounted (74%) [14]. This deviation may be due to in another study participants received multiple times of training and education.We have not collected data of same.

In our study 63.37% had never prepared and handled medico-legal report. Comparatively, Kumar et al. (2017) reported only 36% of doctors were clear on legal documentation processes in Tamil Nadu [16]. this suggests there is a increasing lack of practical exposure in health care professionals for MLC case management.

In our study doctors recommended institutional training 40% and workshop 22% . Among nurses group recommended institutional training 63% and workshop 21%. of respondents expressed interest in further medico-legal training emphasizes a strong perceived need among healthcare professionals through institutional. This is similar to conclusions drawn by Saxena et al. (2022), who demonstrated participants the most preferred training strategy was institutional training programs (50.97%), followed by workshops (32.25%)—highlighting practical learning as a common preference.

## LIMITATIONS:

Single center

In our study we included new interns
Data not collected about number of time training received.

## CONCLUSION:

In our study Doctors are predominantly handling MLC reporting and 63% are not received sufficient training.

Among total participants 31% having fear of legal consequences.

Study participants recommended institutional training (40%) and hands on work shop (20%).

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