

Impact of Two Weeks Training On Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Interns: A Cross Sectional Pre Post Assessment Study Done In A Tertiary Care Medical Institute In North India

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Abstract

Introduction: The shortage of psychiatrists and large treatment gap is common phenomena in Psychiatry. In most of the countries, Psychiatry is still in developing phase. Various factors including negative attitude towards psychiatry among medical graduates is an important factor which hinders uptake of psychiatry as specialty. The current study was intended to study the knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) regarding psychiatry among medical interns and the change in these parameters after training in psychiatry for 2 weeks.

Material and method: Interns who consented to participate in the study were administered a self devised questionnaire having 25 items comprising true/false questions and multiple choice questions for assessment of knowledge and Attitudes Towards Disabled Person (ATDP), a twenty items likert scale devised by Yuker et al to assess their attitudes and practices. 100 interns completed the study. Paired t-test was used to compare means of various parameters before and after 2 weeks

training period. Chisquare test was used to find significant outcomes.

Results: Results of present study indicate that after training, medical students had significant improvement in knowledge and practices. Our results are consistent with previous literature which revealed that medical undergraduate students had shortcomings in knowledge of psychiatry before training.

On the other hand, our results indicate that, there was no significant difference on attitude before and after training among medical students. Previous literature revealed that after training, there was significant change in attitude towards mental disorder.

Keynotes: Interns, Training, Knowledge attitudes & Practices (KAP), Psychiatry

Introduction

Mental health is an integral part of health. Since decades mental health has been neglected and Psychiatry as a discipline has faced lots of difficulties to establish its position in the medical sciences. As per global burden of diseases report 2010, psychiatric illness along with

neurological and substance use disorders contribute 10.4% of total Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs).¹ Indian scenario is not different from worldwide. India lies in low middle income country and neuropsychiatric disorders are estimated to contribute to 11.6% of the global burden of disease.² The current manpower is not enough to tackle this growing menace of psychiatric illnesses. As per mental health atlas 2014, there are only 0.301 psychiatrists per lakh of population as compared to standard norm of 1 psychiatrist per one lakh population.² Considering the burden of psychiatric illnesses and the treatment gap, it is essential to take necessary steps to empower the branch of psychiatry as a discipline. Out of various steps taken in this regard, an important one is to strengthen the manpower and infrastructure. Increasing the number of post graduate seats in psychiatry is a potential solution to increase the man power.

There are various factors that influence opting of psychiatry as post graduate subject by medical graduates. Out of these, negative attitude towards psychiatry among medical graduates has been a consistent factor that hinders uptake of the subject.³ In India, medical interns have to complete 1 year of internship in various specialties of which psychiatry is an important part. The current curriculum provides training period of only 15 days which is much less than as required in other specialties as per norms. Internship acts an important phase in career of medical professional where he gets oriented to various medical specialties including psychiatry. This orientation will help them to be able to become sensitized to the mental illnesses and diagnose and treat common mental illness in primary health care settings. Not only this, it provides a platform to challenge their beliefs and change their attitude towards psychiatry as a subject and their preferential choice for post graduation.

Previous literature has reported negative attitude and inadequate knowledge regarding psychiatry.^{3,4} As per previous studies, two week psychiatry posting has significant impact upon the attitude and knowledge regarding psychiatry.^{5,6} Galka et al⁷ showed that a rotation in psychiatry made positive changes in students' perception of mental illness and their awareness of social and biological etiological factors operative in psychiatric disorders. Feifel et al⁸ suggest that the misconceptions associated with psychiatry and mental illness could be corrected by the medical teaching. But studies which show no or negative attitude of medical students towards patients with mental illness after a rotation in psychiatry raise concerns regarding the efficacy of psychiatric clerkship.⁹ The current study was intended to study the knowledge, attitude and practices towards psychiatry among medical interns and the change in KAP after training in psychiatry for 2 weeks.

Material And Methods

This is a cross sectional pre post assessment study done on interns posted in Department of Psychiatry for their two weeks internship training. Assessments were done at start and end of the posting to assess their knowledge, attitude and practices. Interns who consented to participate in the study were administered a self devised questionnaire having 25 items comprising true/false questions and multiple choice questions for assessment of knowledge and Attitudes Towards Disabled Person (ATDP), a twenty items likert scale devised by Yuker et al¹⁰. Though commonly used for Physical disabilities, it was designed to be used for any kind of disability including mental disability. Response categories range from +3 (agree very much) to -3 (disagree very much). Low score on the scale indicate unfavourable or negative attitudes. The participants in the study comprised of

MBBS interns during March 2016 to December 2016. The final study sample comprised of 100 interns in the pre and post exposure group. Anonymity of the respondents was ascertained for all the participants.

Tools Used

1. Self devised questionnaire containing 25 items comprising true/falls questions and MCQ.
2. Attitudes Towards Disabled Person (ATDP), a twenty items likert scale devised by Yuker et al¹⁰. Though commonly used for Physical disabilities, it was designed to be used for any kind of disability including mental disability. Response categories range from +3 (agree very much) to -3 (disagree very much). Low score on the scale indicate unfavourable or negative attitudes.

Statistics used: Paired t-test was used to compare means of various parameters before and after 2 weeks training period. Chisquare test was used to find significant of outcome after 2 weeks (P<0.5).

Results

Table 1: Impact of psychiatry training on knowledge among medical students (paired t test).

Variable	Before Training Mean ± SD (N = 100)	After Training Mean ± SD (N = 100)	t value (df = 99)
Knowledge	17.68 ± 3.00	18.47 ± 2.95	2.79**

**p > 0.01

Results showed that difference of knowledge, before and after training of psychiatry among medical students. It was found that after training medical students had significant improvement in knowledge of psychiatry (p > 0.01).

Table 2: Impact of psychiatry training on attitude among medical students (paired t test).

Variable	Before Training Mean ± SD (N = 100)	After Training Mean ± SD (N = 100)	t value (df = 99)
Attitude	58.31 ± 17.37	58.47 ± 14.87	0.16

Results showed that difference of attitude before and after training of psychiatry among medical students. It was found that, there was no significant difference on attitude before and after training among medical students.

Table 3: Impact of training of psychiatry on practice among medical students (paired t test).

Variable	Before Training Mean ± SD (N = 100)	After Training Mean ± SD (N = 100)	t value (df = 99)
Practice	51.23 ± 18.38	55.63 ± 15.88	3.74***

***p > 0.001

Results showed that difference of practice before and after training of psychiatry among medical students. It was found that after training, students had significant improvement on practices (p > 0.001).

Discussion

The main aim of present study was to see the impact of training of psychiatry on knowledge, attitude and practices towards mental disorder among interns. Results of present study indicate that after training, medical students had significant improvement in knowledge and practices. Our results are consistent with previous literature which revealed that medical undergraduate students had shortcomings in knowledge of psychiatry before training.⁶

Results of present study can be explained by the Thorndike's Law of exercise which states that those things most often repeated are best remembered. It is the basis of drill and practice. It has been established that students learn best and preserve information longer when they have meaningful practice and repetition which is followed by positive feedback.

On the other hand, our results indicate that, there was no significant difference on attitude before and after training among medical students. Sethi et al in their study observed that medical students had unfavourable attitudes towards patients with mental illness.¹¹ Previous literature revealed that after training, there was significant change in attitude towards mental disorder.^{12,13} Research has shown that greater exposure to and direct working with mentally ill persons during medical training decreases fears and creates a positive attitude.^{14,15}

One reason to confirm our results is that "these days psychiatry is the most important part of the curriculum in medical school" and it may be due to the teaching of psychiatry at the undergraduate level is either disorganized or not done properly.¹⁶ Secondly, due to underlying stigma in our culture, it is not possible to change the attitude within a span of 15 days of psychiatry. Hence, desired outcome may be acquired through the more extensive or scrupulous training of psychiatry for longer duration. These findings demonstrate the need for change in the current medical training system. Dogra et al¹⁷ suggest that stigma and negative attitudes by students are the key issues that need to be addressed through good quality teaching by high profile, enthusiastic and committed teachers of psychiatry. Additionally, both the health and education sectors need to consider how they can effectively support teaching and contribute to the outcome of students having a positive attitude towards

psychiatry as a discipline. Whether the implementation of a core curriculum in psychiatry for medical students prescribed by World Psychiatric Association¹⁸ can bring about these desirable changes remains to be seen.

Conclusion

Considering the fact that psychiatric illnesses are growing and an important cause of disability worldwide, Psychiatry training to medical students should be given equal precedence like other branches of medical sciences. Recognizing psychiatry as a separate discipline should be encouraged. Providing additional elective posting for 15 days is a welcome step in this regard. More steps should be taken to involve MBBS students and interns in Psychiatry posting so that more candidates opt for Psychiatry as specialty.

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