

MINI REVIEW ARTICLE

Health Issues in Medical Students: How We Need To Take Care of Our Future Generation Doctors

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Abstract:

Medical profession is one of the most coveted professions in the society. During the medical course, individuals are subjected to much stress and hardships. Many fail to cope up and quit the course or even land up in substance abuse. A major cause of concern is the health of any medico. On few occasion the disease may be imaginative in nature whereas at other times it may be actually present. There is a need to differentiate between two. At many occasions, there are illnesses which are a cause of worry for both parents and administration. The health of every single budding doctor is important as entrance to medical course is an intellectual superior individual it incurs heavy expenses on the part of the administration and we cannot afford to compromise on such a potential asset to the society. We performed an extensive search of literature such as Pubmed, Scopus and Google for obtaining necessary articles for this short narrative mini review. Search terms included: "medical", "students", "illnesses", "disease." The present review is first of its kind which aims to discuss the medical illness and various diseases affecting the medicos during their professional career. The results of the review may help in better planning in terms of taking care of the health of medical students.

Keywords: Disease, Illness, Medical, Students.

Introduction:

Medical career is one of the toughest professional careers. During the long duration of the career, it requires an individual to devote oneself to constant studying and during the course on many occasions, he or she suffers from one or another illness which may be even life threatening. In this particular review, we consider all medical illness as affecting

medical students. Knowing that the good health status is essential for a budding doctor as we are striving to produce the best doctor for the society, knowledge about ill health in them would also help in better planning for the future. We performed an extensive search of literature such as Pubmed, Scopus and Google for obtaining necessary articles for this short narrative mini review. Search terms included: "medical", "students", "illnesses", "disease." A thorough description of all such diseases and illness in medical students is being discussed in the present review. To the best of our knowledge, the present review may be the first of its kind to cover the medical illness in medicos.

Real Illness or Imaginative Disease?

Medicos may suffer from various diseases but at times the disease may not actually exist. One has to be very careful in diagnosing such. While in clinical wards, any young medico gets baffled while observing the symptoms of any disease for the first time. A constant query haunts the young medico.

An important disease to highlight is known as 'The Second Year Syndrome' or 'The Intern's Syndrome' in which the student may perceive themselves experiencing the symptoms of any disease which they encounter during their visit to clinical wards everyday [1]. Usually, medical students who encounter frightening diseases in the wards have the delusion that they are suffering from the same disease and this is also considered as a temporary kind of hypochondria [2].

There is a report of a medical student who experienced weakness in her arms and

experienced twitching of the muscles thereby thinking that she has amyotrophic lateral sclerosis but the doctor diagnosed it as 'medical school syndrome' [3]. On many occasions, the young medico does not understand the exact disease and may prefer to remain absent from regular classes after having the fear of suffering from the same disease. These incidents need to be probed.

Researchers from the McGill University observed that 70% of the medical students complained symptoms of various illness which they had studied [4]. An interesting case described how an individual thought that he had schizophrenia and later on changed the diagnosis to Meniere's disease but ultimately, he did not have any of these diseases [4, 5].

Sometimes, the disease may be actually present. An interesting incident was narrated by Prof. Barron H Lerner [5]. One of his classmates was feeling weakness and he found that he could not lift weight and also had problems with vision. Interestingly, the first doctor who attended the student thought it to be the imaginary disease present in medical students but it was the second doctor who confirmed the diagnosis of myasthenia gravis.

These incidents open our eyes to attend to any medical student's illness with a degree of concern. Not all diseases may be imaginative and they need thorough assessment. At times, if any disease is detected, the student prefers to keep quiet instead of conveying details to the parents. At times, the disease may actually cause loss of interest in the young medico and this can lead to a drop-out from the course.

Diarrheal Diseases:

According to World Health Organization, there are 1.7 million diarrheal diseases reported every year [6]. There are several etiological factors for diarrheal diseases and it includes food pathogens, bad sanitary and unhygienic habits. Medical students staying in residential campus may suffer from diarrheal diseases as they are continuously exposed to consumption of outside food.

Researchers in Bhopal in India studied the different epidemiological factors related to

gastroenteritis [7]. The results of the study showed that unhygienic food served at hostel mess and the bad quality of drinking water was responsible for causing diarrhea in medical students. Thus, administrative authorities may assume bigger role in providing better sanitation facilities in all residential hostels meant for medicos.

Perception of Epidemic Situation:

It is better to ascertain the seriousness of health awareness should there be any epidemic. A research study conducted in Philippines and Indonesian on medical and health students regarding the risk perception on disaster and disaster-related infections found that risk perception of disaster related infections was related to psychosomatic approach of an individual [8]. Thus, during any outbreak of any disease, it is very important to know the psychological aspect of any individual and we should not wait for any mishap to happen rather gear up from the very beginning.

Hazardous Behaviour among Students:

Psychological stress is more common among medical students. The stress may be due to family problems, striving for academic excellence and easy access to substance abuse may force them to follow a wrong path [9]. The medical students resort to illegal substance abuse which may lead to serious health related problems in later part of the life. The medical students reported for substance abuse were 2.5%-to-7.6% in Turkey whereas another in Saudi Arabia reported it to be 17% [10-14].

Occupational Injuries in Medical Students:

Occupational injuries including accidental prick is very common among medical students. Perhaps, that is the reason why compulsory immunization should be carried out.

A research study conducted in Iran observed that 39.3% of the medicals students suffered had had sharp injuries and this was attributed to damaging vein puncture [15]. Another study in medical students reported wound suturing was the most common cause of injury (33.5%) with the highest incidence (55.5%) being in the emergency room [16].

The increase in incidence in such sharp injuries alerts us to be more careful because it can increase the cost and stress in the life of medical students. A directory may be maintained in the institute which can even help in future follow-up and planning.

Lifestyle Changes to Combat Diseases:

Exercise and physical activity has taken a backseat in many institutions. This has led to increase in the incidence of obesity, hypertension, and diabetes among the young ones. Harvard School of Medicine has taken the right step to a start a student-led, faculty member-advised parallel curriculum in lifestyle medicine [17].

A gap in the traditional knowledge with regard to physical activity, nutrition and behaviour-change strategies was duly addressed.

Conclusion:

Sports and external recreational activities must be encouraged at any cost. Students should be taught that they cannot neglect their own health at any cost. Regular health check-ups and immunizations should also be carried out at regular intervals. Better sanitation facilities should be provided in the residential hostels. Health care policies should be taught during their undergraduate career for better benefit in future.

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