

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### PERCEPTION OF ETHICAL ISSUES, HASSLE IN UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL AND DENTAL EDUCATION

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#### ARTICLE INFO

##### Article History:

Received 09<sup>th</sup> March, 2017

Received in revised form

28<sup>th</sup> April, 2017

Accepted 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2017

Published online 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2017

##### Keywords:

Emergence, Fecundity,

Fertility, Incubation,

Longevity, Morphogenesis,

Oviposition.

#### ABSTRACT

Ethics are an accepted code of conduct that encompasses both professional conduct and opinion. Ethics, as a branch, is a study of what is right and good with respect to character and conduct. As with any profession that deals with human rights and liberties, health care professionals have a responsibility to their patients. The ethical concerns can be faced by the health care professionals at any stage from diagnosis to treatment of a disease. Ethics affect virtually every decision made by the health care professional. For this reason, they should be aware of ethical principles during their professional career. An unethical decision gravely compromises the ability of the health care professional to deliver service to his or her patients and undermines the ability as a professional. With this in mind, the present study was conducted to assess the knowledge and attitude of dental and medical students towards ethical issues in Nagpur city.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Ethics in Greek language means character or conduct (Terrie Bruscano). The foundation of medical ethics was laid at the Hippo crates School (400-300 BC) and since then the idea has revolutionized through different stages (Hippocratic, 2012). The contemporary medical ethics and bioethics today, began after the 2nd world war as a result of contemptible issues in medical research and medical interventions. In current daily practice, medical specialists and the dentists come across common ethical issues. The core issues in medical ethics are the ethics of the doctor patient relationship, patient's confidentiality and the need to obtain informed consent, where as bioethics deals with all encompassing moral issues in medicine and bio medical sciences (Vivek, 2015). Clinical ethics refers to the ethics of activity in the clinical setting, which if practiced, will lead to more ethical care. For clinical personnel to practice clinical ethics, their clinical expertise and subject training need to be honed by appropriate clinical ethics training. Therefore they are expected to know ethical principles and apply them in their practice.

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There are reports of unethical behavioral patterns of all health professionals with patients as well as colleagues. Reports have stressed the need to incorporate ethical and legal issues into their curriculum. Further it has been observed that health training in India provides little guidance for these professionals to resolve the ethical dilemmas they encounter (Thilakavathi Subramanian, 2013). With this background in mind the present study is an attempt to assess the perception of health professional students about common ethical issues encountered in relation to health care.

#### Aim

To assess the perception of all health professionals about common ethical issues encountered in relation to health care

#### Objectives

- To assess knowledge, attitude & practice regarding Ethics & Law among medical & dental professionals in Nagpur city.
- To compare knowledge, attitude & practice regarding Ethics & Law between medical & dental professionals in Nagpur city.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is a descriptive, cross-sectional questionnaire study conducted on medical and dental professionals in Nagpur city in January 2017. A sample size of 500 students was included in the study. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethical Committee.

**Inclusion Criteria:** All health professionals who agreed to fill the questionnaire.

A self administered structured questionnaire was distributed at one point in time to all the participants of health professionals. It was developed to assess and compare the knowledge and attitude of the health care professionals regarding the laws of ethics. The questionnaire consisted of 20 close-ended questions. The respondents were encouraged to answer all the questions in 'yes' or 'no' regarding all options given against different ethical issues.

## Statistical Analysis

For analyzing the results of the study, the number of respondents answering yes, no or blank to a question were measured and the percentages were calculated for each question respectively for dental (first year and second year) and medical students (first year and second year). The mean differences between the perception of dental and medical students based on the positive responses given by them was analyzed using ANOVA test. 0.05 was considered as statistically significant level. Microsoft Excel 2007 and SPSS software 22.0 was used for statistical analysis.

## RESULTS

Around 500 dental (First year and Second year) and medical students (First year and Second year) completed the questionnaire. Table 1 depicts the individual responses by the respondents of the study.

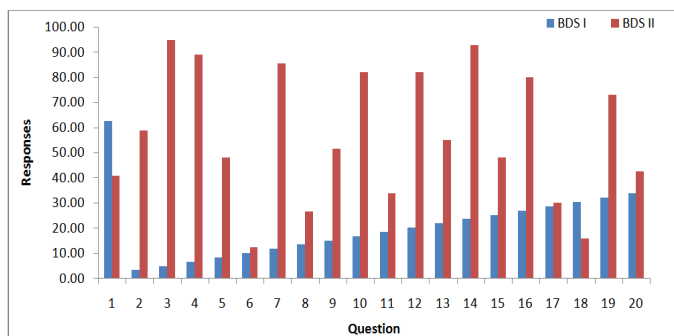
**Table 1. Individual responses of the respondents to each question with yes, no or blank response**

Question No.	RESPONSES											
	BDS I			BDS II			MBBS I			MBBS II		
	YES	NO	BLANK	YES	NO	BLANK	YES	NO	BLANK	YES	NO	BLANK
1	37	22	0	23	33	0	52	48	0	40	55	0
2	25	34	0	33	23	0	78	22	0	67	28	0
3	23	36	0	53	3	0	93	7	0	81	14	0
4	46	13	2	50	6	0	92	8	0	81	14	0
5	12	47	0	27	29	0	21	79	0	21	74	0
6	8	51	3	7	49	2	6	94	4	7	88	4
7	34	25	3	48	8	7	90	10	7	93	2	0
8	15	44	0	15	41	0	15	85	0	25	70	0
9	34	25	8	29	27	0	43	57	0	47	48	0
10	52	7	0	46	10	0	91	9	0	87	8	0
11	52	7	0	19	37	0	36	64	0	34	61	0
12	52	7	0	46	10	6	91	9	5	70	25	6
13	52	7	0	31	25	0	76	24	0	71	24	0
14	51	8	0	52	4	0	96	4	0	93	2	0
15	15	44	0	27	29	0	24	76	0	22	73	0
16	52	7	1	45	11	7	89	11	7	93	2	0
17	27	32	2	17	39	0	32	68	0	29	66	0
18	5	54	0	9	47	6	10	90	5	19	76	6
19	37	22	5	41	15	0	68	32	0	72	23	0
20	28	31	2	24	32	6	23	77	5	22	73	6
Total			26			34			33			22

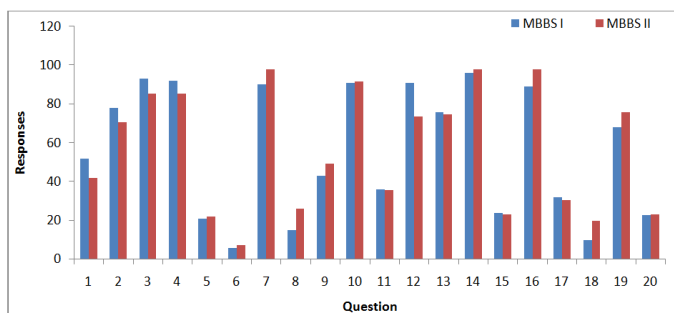
**Table 2. Positive responses given by the respondents to each question and their percentages**

Question No.	RESPONSES							
	BDS I		BDS II		MBBS I		MBBS II	
	YES	%	YES	%	YES	%	YES	%
1	37	62.71	23	41.07	52	52	40	42.11
2	25	42.37	33	58.93	78	78	67	70.53
3	23	38.98	53	94.64	93	93	81	85.26
4	46	77.97	50	89.29	92	92	81	85.26
5	12	20.34	27	48.21	21	21	21	22.11
6	8	13.56	7	12.50	6	6	7	7.37
7	34	57.63	48	85.71	90	90	93	97.89
8	15	25.42	15	26.79	15	15	25	26.32
9	34	57.63	29	51.79	43	43	47	49.47
10	52	88.14	46	82.14	91	91	87	91.58
11	52	88.14	19	33.93	36	36	34	35.79
12	52	88.14	46	82.14	91	91	70	73.68
13	52	88.14	31	55.36	76	76	71	74.74
14	51	86.44	52	92.86	96	96	93	97.89
15	15	25.42	27	48.21	24	24	22	23.16
16	52	88.14	45	80.36	89	89	93	97.89
17	27	45.76	17	30.36	32	32	29	30.53
18	5	8.47	9	16.07	10	10	19	20.00
19	37	62.71	41	73.21	68	68	72	75.79
20	28	47.46	24	42.86	23	23	22	23.16

Table no.2 shows the positive responses and their percentages given by the participants of the study. The complete response of the participants is depicted in graphs 1 and 2. The dental and the medical students were compared based on their knowledge regarding the principles of ethical issues for health professionals and the results show that majority of the participants of the study including both dental and medical fraternity, were aware of ethical principles and issues, the medical students of the second year having better knowledge than first year medical students and dental students of first and second year (Mean of MBBS II 5.67 vs. 3.28 of dental students), although the results were not statistically significant.



Graph 1. Graph showing mean percentages of responses (yes and no) given by dental students



Graph 2. Graph showing mean percentages of responses (yes and no) given by medical students

Table 3. Positive responses given by the respondents to each question and their percentages

Column I	Mean	Standard deviation	P value
BDS I	3.28	0.15	0.22
BDS II	3.21	0.14	
MBBS I	5.33	0.33	
MBBS II	5.67	0.29	

## DISCUSSION

It has been shown that most of the knowledge of bioethics is acquired during the undergraduate training (Hernández González et al., 2014), which has an insightful influence on the behavior and attitude of health care professionals (Elger, 2002 and Sulmasy et al., 1993). This improves the ultimate goals of medicine and therapeutics (Eckles, 2005). Regular workshops and programs should be conducted for adequate training of the health care professionals to update their knowledge and dentistry the insufficiencies if any (Hariharan, 2006 and Walrond, 2006). In the present study, the medical students of the second year have more knowledge and positive attitude

when compared to dental students. This paucity could be due to insufficiency in the curriculum of dental students. The second year medical students had more knowledge than the first year students. This may be due to the fact that ethical issues are not taught at the initial level and seniors have more experience and knowledge because of the exposure to patients. In this study, majority of the respondents has a positive attitude and knowledge regarding bioethics which may be due to the fact the questions were simple and were based on basic ethical issues. Anup. N et al in year 2014 (Anup, 2014), conducted a study to compare Knowledge, attitude & practice regarding Ethics & Law among medical and dental professionals of Jaipur city and concluded that the medical and dental professionals of Jaipur city generally understand the importance of Ethics and law, as majority of participants answered correctly on questions based on knowledge attitude and practice. There were substantial minority of participants who were uncertain or incorrect on the questions pertaining to violent, AIDS patients and religious conflict situations. The knowledge and attitude of the masters were more compared to undergraduates thus study emphasize the need to provide the knowledge of healthcare ethics in curriculum and use of interactive techniques such as Seminars, Workshops, CME conferences which would assist in bridging this gap to certain extent at undergraduate level. Walrond et. al in 2006 (Walrond, 2006), conducted a study to evaluate Knowledge, attitudes and practice of medical students at the Cave Hill campus in relation to ethics and Law in health care and concluded that majority of the participants had answered correctly to the questions based on ethical knowledge. Brogan SA et al (Brogan, 2009) conducted a study in year 2009 to evaluate knowledge and attitude of doctors on medical ethics in a teaching hospital, Manipur and found a close relationship between attitude and increase in age and work experience.

## Conclusion

To conclude, both the dental and medical professionals of Nagpur city have the knowledge and understanding of basic ethical principles since majority of the participants answered correctly. There were a small quantity of individuals who were not sure of the answers. The results of this study some changes in the curriculum of the health care professionals with more weight on ethics. Regular seminars, conferences and workshops should be conducted by the institutions to bring about the awareness of the importance of ethics in therapeutic practice.

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