

S9: Attitudes towards learning communication skills and factors affecting learning communication skills of final year medical students

Wickramasinghe RS¹, Karunaratne A¹, Perera M¹, Thalaspitiya S², Liyanage A²

¹Professorial Surgical Unit, Teaching Hospital Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka; ²Department of Surgery, Faculty of Medicine and Allied Sciences, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka

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Background: It is widely accepted that medical students should acquire and demonstrate proficiency in communication by the end of their undergraduate education although many students do not consider it as important as the clinical skills. This study identifies the attitudes of medical students towards, and the factors affecting learning of communication skills.

Methods: Descriptive cross sectional study was carried out with 162 final year medical students of Rajarata university of Sri Lanka. Their attitudes towards learning communication skills and factors affecting learning communication skills were assessed using a self-administered questionnaire with modified Communication Skills Assessment Scale incorporated with likert scale from a previous Sri Lankan study. Positive attitude scale (PAS) and negative attitude scale (NAS) questions were analyzed separately.

Results: The mean age of the students was 25.8 years. 53.7% (n=87) of students were females. Vast majority were Sinhalese (93.7%) and Buddhists (84.6%). Quarter (25.7%) of the students believed their communication skills were below average and 46.3% thought they are average. One third (34%) were comfortable when communicating with patients in a second language. Majority thought that the communication skills must be taught. 65.4% of the students asked for a separate module on communication skills in their curriculum. 73.5% wanted it to be done before clinicals. 34% opted for audio visual examples, and 35.8% thought role plays with colleagues were better. 61.7% thought that the busy work schedule in the prof unit prevent them from learning communication skills.

Conclusions: The medical students have understood the importance of learning communication skills for their medical carrier and they are interested in learning them. Therefore the medical education should put

more weight on the communication skills adopting novel education strategies.