

What Do the Newly Joined Medical Students Feel about Being a Doctor?- A Cross-Sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND

The medical curriculum in India is changing to make future doctors better. This study was done to know what the newly entered medical student feels about being a doctor.

METHODS

This is a retrospective cross-sectional study conducted from October 2019 to November 2019, at PES Hospital, Kuppam. A total of 89 first year newly joined medical students were given self-prepared questionnaire during the foundation course. The data obtained was analysed in percentages.

RESULTS

Passion for medicine (64.04%), status in society (31.46%) and influence from doctors in family were the main reasons to join medicine. About 8.9% had joined medicine purely as per parents wish. Most students felt foundation course (93.26%) will be helpful. Students were aware that they need to put better efforts to pass than other professions and might be stressful too. Most chose to become a cardiologist after completing under-graduation. Most students felt patient and doctor, both look at communication skills and involvement with the patient to consider as a good doctor. Developing patience and controlling anger is crucial to become a good doctor. Apart from being a doctor, 42.7% thought of joining civil services as other option apart from the profession.

CONCLUSIONS

Students needs to be more oriented regarding communication skills as they felt it's vital to be a good doctor. Importance should be given to stress management as most felt that they need to put more efforts to pass compared to other professions. Need to educate about the role of community medicine in decreasing the burden of disease in society.

KEYWORDS

Being a Doctor, Feel, M.B.B.S, Medical Student, Newly Joined

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BACKGROUND

The medical educationists and regulatory authorities worldwide are reviewing the medical training as the medical graduates are failing to serve the health needs of the society.¹ When junior doctors start working, it is termed as killing season or August nightmare in United Kingdom.²⁻⁴ Traditional preclinical curriculum is based on by heart or memorization of scientific facts. This may negatively influence both factual understanding and professional identity development in medical students. Students felt that a physician should have good communication skills, humble and open, combining biomedical knowledge and moral strength.⁵ The evidence shows enhanced engagement for students aligned to their first future foundation year, post with greater opportunities for workplace acclimatization.⁴ The Medical Council of India (MCI) has started foundation course for new students entering the medical education as a part of the new curriculum. Foundation Course is of one month duration at the beginning of the MBBS course that will sensitize the fresh medical student with the required knowledge and skills that will assist him/her in acclimatizing to the new professional environment which would be his/her milieu for a life-long career in the medical profession.⁶ A topic on "What it is to be a doctor?" was taken as a part of foundation course. Before the topic a questionnaire was given regarding the same, to know what the newly entered MBBS student feels about being a doctor. The knowledge thus gained will help in understanding and guiding them in future. We wanted to assess as to what the newly entered MBBS students feel about being a doctor.

METHODS

This is a retrospective cross-sectional study conducted from October 2019 to November 2019, at PES Hospital, Kuppam. A total of 89 first year newly joined medical students selected through purposive sampling were given self-prepared questionnaire during the foundation course. Retrospective data of questionnaire which was taken as a part of foundation course on the topic "What do newly-entered MBBS students feel about being a doctor?" in September 2019 for newly joined MBBS students as per MCI curriculum. A set of 20 questions regarding being a doctor was given at the start of the session. This session was followed by a classroom teaching and interactive session on being a doctor for one hour. Ethical committee approval was obtained to collect the data. The identity of study participants was not revealed. The data was entered in excel sheet and analysed as percentages.

RESULTS

A total of 89 newly joined M.B.B.S students were included in the study. The reason for joining M.B.B.S course is shown in

table 1. The other potions apart from those mentioned in table were – "1) Passion to serve people (8/89, 8.99%) and 2) Doctors are rude and need to change (1/89, 1.12%)."

Reason	Overall (Includes Other Options Too)	Single Option or Only Reason (Compared to Specific Option)	Single Option or Only Reason (Compared to Total Number of Students)
Passion for Medicine	57/89 (64.04%)	28/57 (49.12%)	28/89 (31.46%)
Job/Financial Security	13/89(14.61%)	2/13 (23.07%)	2/89 (2.25%)
Status in Society	28/89 (31.46%)	4/28 (14.29%)	4/89 (4.49%)
Parents Wish	30/89 (33.71%)	8/30 (26.67%)	8/89 (8.99%)
Influence from doctors in family	18/89(16.85%)	9/15 (60%)	9/89 (10.11%)

Table 1. Why Did You Join M.B.B.S?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Did you join M.B.B.S by choice?	91.01% (81/89)	8.99% (8/89)	-
Did you analyze about pros and cons of the M.B.B.S Course before joining?	41.57% (37/89)	58.43% (52/89)	-
Do you think the newly introduced foundation course taking you around hospital, making you oriented about medical course and other aspects like communication will be helpful in getting oriented more towards the medicine field before first year classes start?	93.26% (83/89)	1.12% (1/89)	5.62% (5/89)
Do you think doctor is God, which usually is said in TV (Vaidyo Narayano Hari)	73.03% (65/89)	17.89% (16/89)	8 (8.99%)
Do you think doing MBBS and speciality fields, you can earn more than other profession?	30.34% (27/89)	33.7% (30/89)	35.96% (32/89)
Do you feel, you need to spend good time playing sports/physical activity after joining MBBS?	66.29% (59/89)	15.73% (14/89)	17.98% (16/89)
Do you think countries which are richer & developed; have better health care & happiness index than other countries?	30.34% (27/89)	41.57% (37/89)	28.09% (25/89)

Table 2. Various Aspects of What Do the Newly Joined Medical Students Feel about Being a Doctor?

Do you think you have sacrificed a lot of social life and time getting into medicine	39.33% (35/89)	47.19% (42/89)	13.48% (12/89)
Do you think you need to put a lot of efforts to pass medicine than other courses	76.4% (68/89)	16.85% (15/89)	6.74% (6/89)
Do you think doctors sleep less & spend less social life than other profession?	58.43% (52/89)	24.72% (22/89)	16.85% (15/89)
Do you think doing MBBS- you need to study a lot & have sleepless Nights?	59.55% (53/89)	23.06% (21/89)	16.85% (15/89)

Table 3. Efforts to Get into Medicine and Pass the Course

What is pass marks cut off in MBBS exams?

About 66.29% (59/89) answered correctly that the pass mark cut-off to pass each exam is 50%, 24.72% (22/89) felt the cut-off is 40% and 8.99% (8/89) felt the cut-off is 35%.

Preferred specialization and other options post MBBS completion. What specialist do you want to become after completing MBBS?

(Numbers given in decreasing order of preference)

1. Cardiologist – 21 (23.6%)
2. Obstetrics and Gynaecology – 12 (13.48%)
3. General Surgery – 10 (11.24%)
4. Neurologist – 8 (8.99%)
5. Paediatrics, Neurosurgery – 6 (6.74%)
6. Orthopaedics, Dermatology - 4 (4.49%)
7. Oncologist, Radiology – 2 (2.25%)
8. Nephrologist, Pulmonologist, Paediatric Surgery, Endocrinology, Anaesthesia, Ophthalmologist – 1 (1.21%)

Only about 6.74% (6/89) preferred to join “teaching profession”.

Do you think there are other options in other fields after doing MBBS apart from being doctor or specialist for you?

About 44.94% (40/89) felt there were other options to explore apart from MBBS after passing, 31.46% (28/89) wants to continue with medical profession only in future and 23.6% (21/89) were not sure.

Apart from becoming a doctor after MBBS, can you list out few professions, which you can join?

Civil Servant (Civil services exam)	42.7% (38/89)
Writer/ Director/Entrepreneur	7.87% (7/89)
Research	5.62% (5/89)
Army	4.49% (4/89)
Business	4.49% (4/89)
Politician or sports person	2.25% (2/89)
Only sports	2.25% (2/89)
Artist	2.25% (2/89)
Army or Politician or social worker	2.25% (2/89)
Photographer	1.17% (1/89)
English Professor	1.17% (1/89)
Astronaut	1.17% (1/89)
Author	1.17% (1/89)
Architect	1.17% (1/89)

Table 4. List of Professions to Explore Apart from Medicine

Who is better according to you in decreasing disease burden in society?

Most felt practicing doctor (53.93%, 48/89) decreases the burden of disease in the society. About 33.7% (30/89) felt the community physician/Medicine persons has major role to play and 12.36% (11/89) were unsure about it.

Qualities of Good Doctor

What do you think the patients look for, to judge you as a good doctor? (single best answer)

- Communication & Involvement with Patient – 76.4% (68/89)
- Medical Knowledge and management – 13.48% (12/89)
- Ethics – 8.9% (8/89)
- Teaching and research Experience – 1.12% (1/89)

What aspects as a doctor you think makes the other person, a good doctor? (single best answer)

- Communication & Involvement with Patient – 41.5% (37/89)
- Medical Knowledge and management – 34.83% (31/89)
- Ethics – 19.1% (17/89)
- Teaching and research Experience – 4.49% (4/89)

Do you think developing patience & control anger is a vital to become a doctor?

About 96.63% (86/89) felt controlling anger and develop patience was important to become a good doctor. None were against it though 3.37% (3/89) were unsure about the same.

DISCUSSION

A dedicated one month exclusive “Foundation Course”, at the beginning of the MBBS course, to orient and sensitize the student to the various identified areas has been started by MCI from year 2019.⁶ A class during the foundation course on topic “What it is feels about being a Doctor?” was utilized to know the perception of newly entered students to profession, so that it helps to guide them in future. In our study 93.26% felt that foundation course will help them to get better oriented to medicine field. Single reason to join the profession was passion to become a doctor (31.46%), though majority had multiple reasons in this study. The reasons why people choose to study a Medicine degree, ranges from personal preference to calculated financial gain. It can be the first choice or the backup degree option. After graduation one has a broad range of opportunities for a future job in the field of Medicine. There are over various specialties you can choose from.⁷ The profession can meet the various preferences or likes of each person ranging from financial to academic and research.

About 8.9% joined medicine by parents wish in our study. Parents know that if their kid or kids become doctors they will have a job, a very decent living, get respect, be rich if they invest their money wisely, able to help take care of the parents when they get older because of the money aspect, take care of their children and educate them well etc.⁸ Carrier in medicine is stressful and forcing a child into it can be stressful in many ways and critical.⁹ In our study about 58.43% didn’t analyse pros and cons before joining the course. Most had joined by passion or influence from others. In Andhra, the decision to take medicine is usually taken at high school level. In our study only 30.34% felt doctors can earn better than other profession (usually compared to engineering). Four years of engineering can get you a yearly package of 4 to 5 lacks; and if you manage to get an MBA after that, a package of 12 to 45 lacks can be offered to you. Careers of engineers have become much more certain after the advent Information Technology.¹⁰ You need a specialization to earn 5 to 6 lacks initially in medicine. You need to invest if you want to have own practice. You also loose extra years in studying compared to other profession.¹⁰ In our study 47.19% felt they did not put extra efforts to join medicine compared mostly to students who joined engineering. Students know that they have to put extra efforts to pass medicine as pass percentage is 50% (66% were aware in this study) compared to 35% in engineering. About 58.43% felt their social life will be more compromised; spend more sleepless nights (59.5%) and extra effort to pass (76.4%) compared to other professional education. Most students think doctor is God, which usually is said in TV (Vaidyo Narayano Hari) (73.03%). The Sanskrit versus from where Vaidyo Narayano Hari came from is

"sharire jharjharibhoote vyaadhigraste kalevare |
aushadham jaahnavitoyam vaidyo naaraayano harih ||"¹¹

If we understand the meaning of the shloka as entire, doctor is not god as projected usually in media. Shareera means the body, which is bound to be destroyed. Medicine is like a sacred water of river Ganga. The shloka says, even if one takes enough medicine, the body is eventually something that will decay and get destroyed. Narayana, the god is the sole protector.¹¹ Even Quran and Bible say that doctor is god.¹²

Most students wanted to become cardiologist 23.6% followed by obstetrics and gynaecology (OBG)13.48%, general surgery 11.24%, neurologist 8.99%, paediatrics/neurosurgery – 6 (6.74%) etc. Most students felt practicing doctor (53.93%) decreases the burden of disease in the society. The role of family physician or community physician in decreasing burden of disease was less known. The students need to be stressed on role of community disease in decreasing the burden of disease during the course early. The healthcare system of USA was one of the least cost-effective in reducing mortality rates compared to the UK. It was one of the most cost-effective over the period. USA invests more on specialties, whereas UK has more general practitioners and better primary health care.¹³ Primary care is an essential component of sustainable, appropriate, and affordable healthcare systems.¹⁴ The factors affecting career choices among medical students are demographics, indebtedness, career-related beliefs, values and attitudes, personality profiles, and academic performance. Career which gives more income and students feel they can control are preferred.¹⁵ OBG was second preference in this study, may be due to more female-students in the class.

Teaching profession was chosen as career in only 6.74% in our study. Apart from medicine 44.94% felt there are other career options to explore. Most felt joining civil services (42.7%) is good alternative apart from being a doctor after graduation. Most students felt both from patient and as a doctor point of view to become a good doctor one has to have good communication skills and involvement with the patient. From doctors point of view students also felt he should be knowledgeable too in our study. Most felt that controlling anger and developing patience also was important to become a good doctor in this study. Patients had a stronger focus on communication skills, whereas doctors put more emphasis on medical skills. Balancing this discrepancy will be a challenge for future medical education.¹⁶ In these studies 30.34% students felt happiness and health index are better in countries with high GDP. The countries with the happiest immigrants are not the richest countries, but instead the countries with a more balanced set of social and institutional supports for better lives.¹⁷ The attributes of a good doctor fall in the six categories: 1. General interpersonal qualities, 2. Communication and patient involvement, 3. Medical competence, 4. Ethics, 5. Medical management, 6. Teaching, research, and continuous education appeared conclusive and practical useful.¹⁶ The future medical education should aim to involve these to bring out better doctors.¹⁶

CONCLUSIONS

Students need to be more oriented regarding communication skills as they felt that it is vital to be a good doctor. Importance should be given to stress management as most felt that they need to put more efforts to pass compared to other professions. There is a need to educate the students about the role of community medicine in decreasing the burden of disease in the society.

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