

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Student's Perception about Foundation Course: A Cross Sectional Questionnaire based Comparative Study between Tribal and Urban Medical Colleges of Chhattisgarh

¹Dr. Bithika Nel Kumar, ²Dr. Gautam Kashyap, ³Dr. Hemant Kumar Kanwar, ⁴Dr. Ratna Agrawal, ⁵Dr. Saurabh Kumar Sahu, ⁶Dr. Ranu Manhar

¹Associate Professor, Department of Anatomy, Late Baliram Kashyap Memorial Government Medical College, Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Orthopedics, Chandulal Chandrakar Memorial Government Medical College, Durg, Chhattisgarh, India

³Assistant Professor, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Chandulal Chandrakar Memorial Government Medical College, Durg, Chhattisgarh, India

⁴Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacology, Chandulal Chandrakar Memorial Government Medical College, Durg, Chhattisgarh, India

⁵Assistant Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Chandulal Chandrakar Memorial Government Medical College, Durg, Chhattisgarh, India

⁶Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Chandulal Chandrakar Memorial Government Medical College, Durg, Chhattisgarh, India

Corresponding Author

Dr. Ratna Agrawal

Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacology, Chandulal Chandrakar Memorial Government Medical College, Durg, Chhattisgarh, India

Email: ratna.arang@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Foundation course has been added as an important part of MBBS curriculum since 2019 under new competency based medical education regulations. And since then continuous changes are going on in its conduct in order to improvising it and for making it more beneficial for the students. Recently according to new CBME gazette 2024, its duration has been reduced to 14 days for the academic year 2024 and further. The existing data showed that it is still in its infancy stage. **Aim:** To get perception of students about foundation course, their experience about it and further suggestions to improve it. **Methods:** This cross sectional, questionnaire based comparative study has been conducted between urban and tribal area government medical colleges of Chhattisgarh after taking approval from Institutional Ethics committee and informed consent from participants. A questionnaire in Google form was given to all students on the day of feedback session of foundation course after explaining its objectives to them. The responses were collected and data was analysed using descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis for open ended questions. **Results:** Response rate of students for urban and tribal medical colleges was 87.5% and 98.2% respectively. Majority of the students from both the medical colleges were satisfied with the conduction and sessions of the foundation course. The suggestions given by the students for inclusion of more sessions of hands on training on basic life support, personality development and language skills. **Conclusion:** A well designed and executed foundation course may play vital role in successful implementation of new CBME curriculum by acclimatising the students to new professional environment. It may help students to allay their anxiety and increase their interest in course which may proven as an important milestone in achieving the goal of Indian medical graduate.

Key words: CBME, Foundation course, MBBS students, Questionnaire based study.

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INTRODUCTION

According to new competency based medical education (CBME) launched on 2019 by National Medical Commission (NMC), foundation course is mandatory for first year MBBS students. The goal of foundation course is to sensitize the fresh medical students with the required knowledge and skills that will assist him/her in acclimatizing to the new professional environment.¹ Many students enter in a new environment of medical college at the age of around 17 years just after passing high school which may be challenging for them. So, it is mandatory to provide them a favorable environment to allay the anxiety and make them comfortable.¹

Initially the duration of foundation course was kept for one month but now it has been reduced to 14 days according to new gazette notification for CBME to be followed for admission year 2024 and further.² The reduction in the duration of foundation course might have been done as many of the activities of it has been integrated throughout the course and the same will be covered in later phases.² The existing data showed that foundation course has been implemented properly at some of the colleges across India while it is still in infancy stage at most of the institutions. So, the present study aimed to get perception of students about foundation course, their experience of said duration and further suggestions for improvising it.

METHODS

This cross sectional questionnaire based study was conducted at two different (one urban and one tribal) Government medical colleges of Chhattisgarh involving newly admitted MBBS students of batch 2024. The duration of study was for 14 days as per new guidelines for CBME 2024 mentioned for

foundation course. The topics and hours for foundation course were selected as mentioned in foundation course module and new CBME guidelines 2024. Complete foundation course schedule was circulated in advance among all the faculties for proper preparation and smooth conduction of the course. A questionnaire in Google form was given to all the students on the day of feedback session of foundation course with explanation of its objectives. Responses were collected in Google spreadsheet and data have been analyzed with SPSS version 22.0 using descriptive statistics and results are presented in counts and percentages for quantitative data. Qualitative analysis was done for open ended questions. Institutional Ethics Committee approval and informed consent was taken from all the students.

RESULTS

This cross sectional questionnaire based study was conducted at urban and tribal area government medical colleges (GMC) of Chhattisgarh to compare the perception of undergraduate students about foundation course. A questionnaire in Google form was sent to all the students on the feedback session of foundation course. Out of 200 students 160 students attended the foundation course properly from urban medical college and 118 students out of 125 attended at tribal area GMC. Out of 160 students 140 students gave feedback regarding foundation course at urban GMC while 114 out of 118 students responded at tribal area GMC. Response rate and demographic profile of the students has been presented in Table 1. Perception of students about awareness, conduct and overview of foundation course has been presented in Table 2.

Table 1: Demographic profile of students

	Urban GMC (n = 160)	Tribal GMC (n = 118)
Response rate	87.5% (140)	98.2% (118)
Age (in years)		
• Below 18	-	09 (7.9%)
• 18 – 25	139 (99.3%)	105 (92.1%)
• More than 25	01 (0.7%)	-
Gender		
• Male	62 (44.3%)	58 (50.9%)
• Female	78 (55.7%)	56 (49.1%)

Table 2: Perception of students about awareness, conduct and overview of foundation course

Questionnaire	Urban GMC (n = 140)		Tribal GMC (n = 114)	
	YES	NO	YES	No
Awareness about Foundation Course				
Were you aware about foundation course before joining the course?	105 (75%)	35 (25%)	62 (54.4%)	52 (45.6%)
Is foundation course compulsory to attend?	116 (82.9%)	24 (17.1%)	109 (95.6%)	05 (4.4%)
Conduct of Foundation Course				
Was the time table and schedule were given to you in advance?	113 (80.7%)	27 (19.3%)	109 (95.6%)	05 (4.4%)

Do you think that time allotted for foundation course is sufficient?	137 (97.9%)	3 (2.1%)	105 (92.1%)	09 (7.9%)
Should sports and extra-curricular activities be included in foundation course?	139 (99.3%)	1 (0.7%)	114 (100%)	0
Achievement of purpose of Foundation Course				
Have you attended all the sessions sincerely?	135 (96.4%)	5 (3.6%)	109 (95.6%)	05 (4.4%)
Did foundation course oriented to you about MBBS curriculum and medical profession?	136 (97.1%)	4 (2.9%)	113 (99.1%)	01 (0.9%)
Did foundation course provide you opportunity to interact with your teachers and peers?	138 (98.6%)	2 (1.4%)	114 (100%)	0
Did foundation course provide you to orient yourself to the environment of College and Hospital?	135 (96.4%)	5 (3.6%)	113 (99.1%)	01 (0.9%)
Did foundation course help you to orient yourself with community people during field visits?	137 (97.9%)	3 (2.1%)	108 (94.7%)	06 (5.3%)
Did foundation course help you to develop your skills in the field of first aid and basic life support?	123 (87.9%)	17 (12.1%)	109 (95.6%)	05 (4.4%)
Did foundation course help you in building the professional and ethical attitude for your future career?	140 (100%)	0	114 (100%)	0
Did foundation course help you in improving local language, English and Computer skills?	122 (87.1%)	18 (12.9%)	108 (94.7%)	06 (5.3%)
Did foundation course encourage you to improve your communication skills?	134 (95.7%)	6 (4.3%)	106 (93%)	08 (7%)
Was foundation course useful and interesting for you?	137 (97.9%)	3 (2.1%)	113 (99.1%)	01 (0.9%)
Overview about Foundation Course				
According to you, whether foundation course should be an important part of MBBS curriculum?	130 (92.9%)	10 (7.1%)	112 (98.2%)	02 (1.8%)

Upon asking about the source of information of foundation course, multiple responses were given by students and most of the students have chosen source as friends from senior batches [urban GMC (62.6%), rural GMC (44.4%)] and social media [urban GMC (29.9%), rural GMC (36.4%)] followed by GMER gazette [urban GMC (9.9%), rural GMC (10.1%)] at both the colleges.

Opinion given by the students regarding the topics which must be given more emphasis during

foundation course, maximum number of students opined hands on training in basic life support and first aid (16.4%) followed by local language (10.7%) and extracurricular activities and sports (10.7%) and field visits (5.7%) from urban GMC while students from rural GMC also opted for training on basic life support and first aid (19.8%) and local language (10.7%) respectively. Topics enjoyed by the students in complete foundation course duration have been depicted in Figure 1 and 2.

Figure 1: Topics of foundation course enjoyed by students (n = 140)

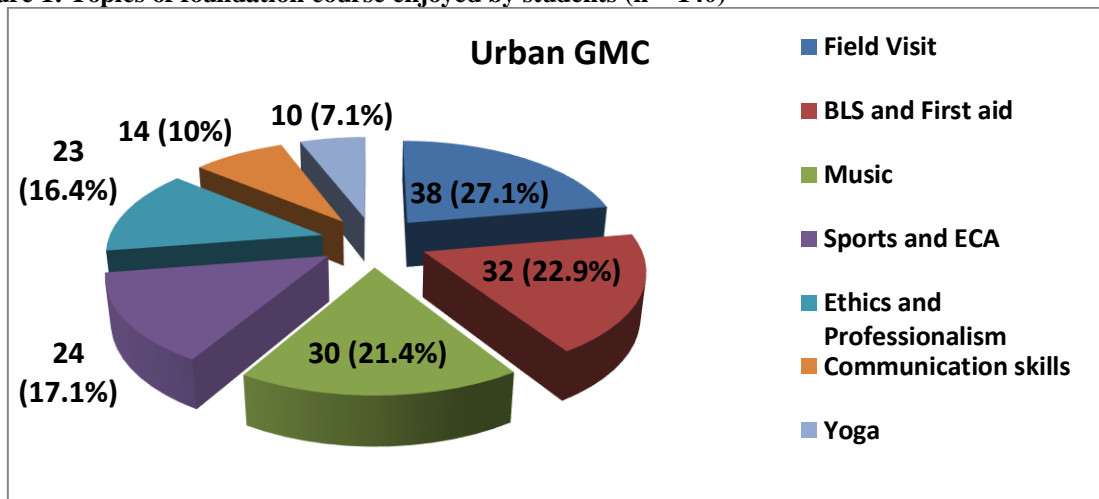
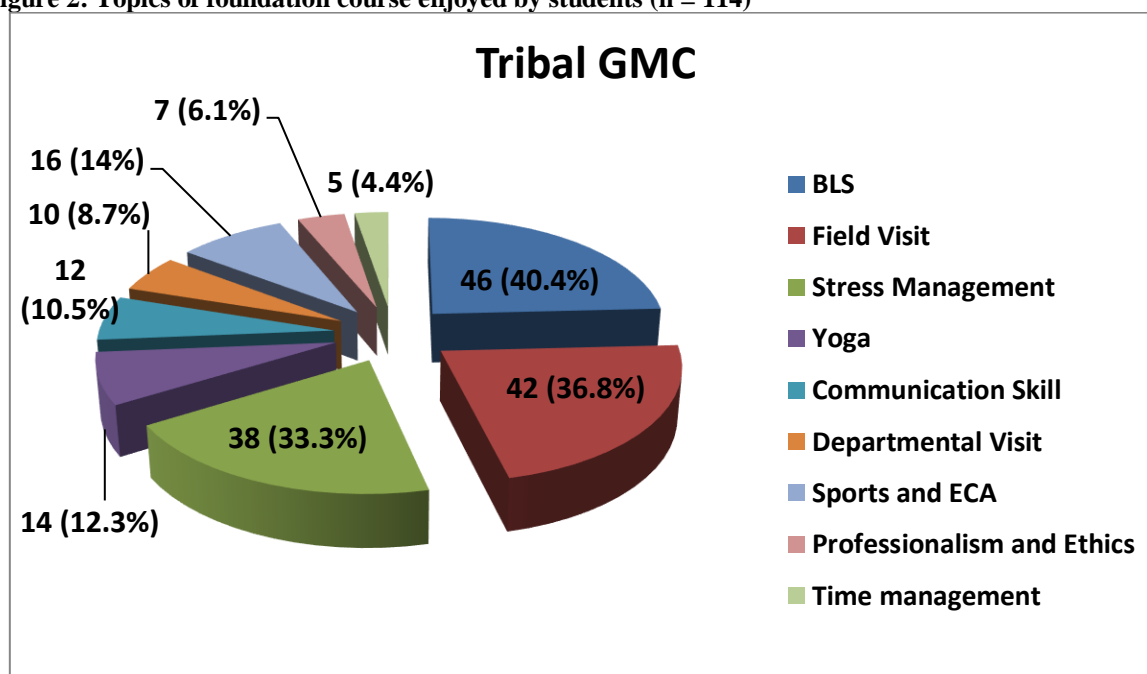


Figure 2: Topics of foundation course enjoyed by students (n = 114)



Qualitative analysis

The question regarding expectations and perceptions of students about different modules of foundation course has been asked as open ended questions. Responses of those questions were descriptive in nature and presented in Table 3 and 4.

Table 3: Expectations of students about foundation course

Urban area GMC	Tribal area GMC
“We will be able to interact with our faculties and friends and will be made familiar with MBBS curriculum”	“We expected guidance and mentorship from teachers”
“Will learn personality etiquettes and learn about ethics and professionalism, responsibilities of doctors and patient care”	“Being able to understand the curriculum of my degree and the understanding of being an IMG”
“had expectation that the basics of all first year subjects will be taught and foundation course will act like a bridge course between high school and college”	“We expected it to help us get in pace with the medical studies and orient our self with it making us mentally prepared”
“Expected that foundation course will help to adapt to new environment swiftly and smoothly”	“We expected the foundation course to make us aware of the campus, MBBS course, faculties and how future in as a medical student will look like”

“Expected that it will be party like thing for celebration”	“I had expected that I would be taught about the ethics and decorum. The right conduct of behavior as a doctor”
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Table 4: Perception of students about different modules of foundation course

Module	Response of students from Urban GMC	Response of students from Tribal GMC
Orientation	“Informative and motivating, helped us to adapt to the environment and to interact with our faculties and peers. Got acquainted with MBBS curriculum”	“Being able to understand the curriculum of my degree and the understanding of being an IMG” “It made me aware of the campus, MBBS curriculum, college and hospital campus, faculties and how in future as a medical student it will look like” “Informative , guidance to academic curriculum and about the department, to know about the code of conduct in the institution”
Skill	“Classes on first aid and basic life support were good although more time and practical sessions must be there”	“Basic life support. I felt like an active participant”
Community orientation	“Enjoyed the field visit, but needed some more interactive sessions with adopted families”	“Understood healthcare infrastructure through field visits to CHCs and exposure to community health settings”
Professional development and Ethics	“Enjoyed the class of ethics and professionalism, got to know about different qualities of professional, more classes can be arranged for personality development”	“A strong focus on the responsibilities and behavior expected from future doctors, including essential topics like communication with patient, respect for cultural values, and anti-ragging policies”
Language and Computer skills	“Class on local language was very interesting and communication skills classes boosted my confidence”	“ Classes on communication skills helped me to develop strong communication skills, a composed demeanor in front of others, effective body language, and the ability to interact with people in a calm and collected manner”
Sports and Extracurricular activities	“Inclusion of games, yoga and singing were very enjoyable but more sessions of ECA must be there”	“Meditation and yoga classes were highly enjoyable. They provided valuable insights into calming the mind and soul, and offered knowledge about chakras and breathing exercises. Additionally, they taught me how to recharge my mind after a stressful situation” “More extracurricular activities should be added and more time given for it”

DISCUSSION

This comparative, cross sectional study was conducted for getting the perception of students about foundation course of urban and tribal region of government medical colleges. At both the colleges, majority of the students opted that foundation course must be an important part of MBBS curriculum unlike the study conducted by Shashikala N et al where about 23% of the students told that there is no need of foundation course at the beginning of academic year.³ The reason in favor of conduction of foundation course may be that NMC has reduced the total duration of foundation course from one month to 14 days which has removed the repetitions of topics and well planned and executed foundation course at both the government medical colleges might have improved the perception of students towards it.

Majority of the students from both the medical colleges in the study were satisfied with the conduct of course as it was well planned in advance, including all the topics mentioned in foundation course module. This findings are in line with the study conducted by Vyas S et al, Sobti S et al and Khilnani AK et al.⁴⁻⁶ Although some of the students from urban GMC mentioned that foundation course schedule was not shared with them in advance, the reason behind the same may be that some of the students had joined the course in between due to ongoing counseling process of all India quota round and they might have skipped the initial few classes.

Students from both the GMC were satisfied with all the sessions of foundation course except some of the sessions of skill module i.e. first aid and basic life support and local language and English skills, where

they have opined that more classes with hands on training must be included. Results of the study corroborates with the study conducted by Lakshmi M S et al who also reported the same.⁷ The reason behind the same may be that being entered in medical college, students might have increased interest in the topic, so they want to know more about it in details.

The responses about expectations and perceptions of students were qualitative in nature and majority of the students had expected that foundation course will provide them opportunity to interact with their faculties, peers and will orient them about hospital environment. The results of the study corroborates with the study conducted by Raveendra L et al.⁸ Although some of the students expected that it will work as bridge course and some had expectation that it will be party like thing for celebration.

Perception of students towards foundation course was recorded as almost all the students from both the medical colleges were satisfied with conduct of foundation course except for few sessions for which they have asked for more time like personality development, BLS and first aid and language skills. This is in concordance with the other studies conducted by Raveendra L et al, Dixit R et al and Dabas A et al.⁸⁻¹⁰

CONCLUSION

Study results concluded that foundation course is a much needed part of MBBS curriculum to orient the young students about medical fraternity, its ethics and decorum. A well planned and executed foundation course can help students to allay anxiety and fear of new environment. And as per suggestions of students, more sessions on basic life support, personality development and language skills may be added. It will be more fruitful if commencement of foundation course will be scheduled only after completion of all admission process.

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