

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Perceptions of first year medical students on attitude, ethics and communication module

¹Dr. Kavitha B S,²Dr. Shashiraj H K,³Dr. Arun Kumar H P,⁴Dr. Sathisha T G,⁵Dr. Pavithra V

¹Associate Professor, Department of Physiology, Siddaganga Medical College and Research Institute, Tumakuru, Karnataka, India

²Professor & HOD, Department of Physiology, Siddaganga Medical College and Research Institute, Tumakuru, Karnataka, India

³Professor, Department of Physiology, Siddaganga Medical College and Research Institute, Tumakuru, Karnataka, India

⁴Professor & HOD, Department of Biochemistry, Shridevi Institute of Medical Science and Research Hospital, Tumakuru, Karnataka, India

⁵Assistant Professor, Department of Clinical Research, Shridevi Institute of Allied Health Sciences, Tumakuru, Karnataka, India

Corresponding Author

Dr. Shashiraj H K

Professor & HOD, Department of Physiology, Siddaganga Medical College and Research Institute, Tumakuru, Karnataka, India

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The Graduate Medical Education Regulation 2019 introduced by NMC which is a statutory body for regulating Medical Education in India represents the last major revision to the medical curriculum since 1997. Attitude, ethics and communication module teaching is new to medical educators and students as it was always been a part of hidden curriculum. Role modelling and mentoring associated with classical approach is no longer sufficient for development of a medical professional. Hence it is important to study the perception and expectations of students which might be a contributing factor to improve the efficacy of this newly introduced modules. Hence the present study was taken up with the aim of studying the perceptions of students on AETCOM module to assess the appropriateness of teaching learning methods used and improvise on our teaching methods based on the feedback from the students. **Methods:** A cross sectional study was done among 150 first year MBBS students on AETCOM module sessions. Data was collected by using a self-structured validated questionnaire consisting of 5 point Likert scale. **Results:** Majority (91%) of the students felt that the topics covered were relevant. 88% of students felt that objectives of the sessions were met. 66% of the students suggested to include more videos and role play in the teaching sessions. **Conclusion:** The AETCOM sessions were received positively by the students which would enable them to function effectively as envisaged in the revised Graduate Medical Education Regulations.

Key words: AETCOM module, medical education, student perceptions

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INTRODUCTION

NMC which is a statutory body for regulating Medical Education in India aspires to ensure that the "Graduate" meets or exceeds global benchmark in knowledge, attitude, skills and communication¹.

The Graduate Medical Education Regulations 2019 represents the last major revision to the medical curriculum since 1997 and hence incorporates changes in science & thought over two decades².

In order to be able to function appropriately ethically and efficiently in his role as a clinician,

communicator, lifelong learner, leader and a true professional, NMC has rolled out a structured longitudinal program on attitude, ethics and communication³. Role modelling and mentoring associated with classical approach to professional apprenticeship has long been a powerful tool. This approach is no longer sufficient for the development of a medical professional⁴.

The traditional curriculum gave importance in a predominant manner only to cognitive domain, leaving behind affective and communication domain⁵.

This disparity has created a lacunae in the field of medical education leading to mistrust between general population and health care professionals⁶. This lead to the thought that the domain of attitude and communication with emphasis on ethics has to be taught directly and explicitly throughout the undergraduate curriculum through a framework of competencies which the students should acquire in all the three domains⁷.

Though the module offers approach to teaching learning methods, it has been suggested that the institutions can develop their own approaches to impart these competencies.

Hence the present study was taken up with the aim of studying the perceptions of students on AETCOM module to assess the appropriateness of teaching learning methods used and improvise on our teaching methods based on the feedback from the students.

Materials and Methods

This cross sectional study was done among 150 first

year MBBS students of 2019-20 batch of Sri Siddhartha Medical College, Tumakuru on AETCOM module sessions conducted by the Department of Physiology. Institutional ethical clearance was obtained and informed consent was taken from the participants. An exploratory session with the students enquiring from them about their views on health, disease and suffering was done. Discussion also involved about their personal ill health or involving someone they know among their families and friends. Students were assigned to patients in the hospital to interview them about their experiences, reactions, emotions, outlook and expectations. Self-directed learning sessions were conducted and a closure session with students sharing their reflections about the sessions was done. Data was collected by using a self-structured validated questionnaire consisting of 5 point Likert scale. The responses collected were entered in excel sheet and expressed as percentages using descriptive statistics.

Results

Table 1: Student's perception about AETCOM module

Questions	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The topics covered in the module were relevant	111	74	25	17	9	6	3	2	2	1
Teaching learning methods used were appropriate	108	72	11	7	22	15	6	4	3	2
AETCOM session helps us to improve communication skills	110	73	25	17	3	2	6	4	6	4
Useful for gaining patient confidence	108	72	28	19	6	4	5	3	3	2
Helps us to recognize ethical issues during patient encounter and practice medicine professionally	103	69	23	15	16	11	6	4	2	1
Facilitates development of compassion and empathy	120	80	9	6	12	8	7	5	2	1
Can avoid medico legal issues	80	53	18	12	42	28	6	4	4	3

Table 2: Student's feedback on ECE session

Items	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Objectives of the session were met	97	65	35	23	15	10	2	1	1	1
Was time management done adequately	103	69	36	24	4	3	5	3	2	1
Provided adequate time for reflection writing	94	63	30	20	17	11	6	4	3	2
Boosts my confidence to handle patients better in future	108	72	23	15	13	9	4	3	2	1
Motivated us to learn more about the topic	106	71	32	21	6	4	6	4	0	0
Were the sessions interactive	95	63	34	23	15	10	5	3	1	1

Table 3: Student's suggestions regarding AETCOM sessions

Suggestions	Number	Percentage
Want multiple exposures continuously throughout the course	119	79
Need to include more videos and role play.	99	66
Need more hospital visit for real patient encounters	127	85

Majority (91%) of the students felt that topics covered in the module were relevant and 79% found the teaching method used appropriate.

90% of the students felt that these sessions helps them to improve their communication skills and 72%

strongly agree that the AETCOM sessions helps them to gain patient's confidence.

84% of the students were of the opinion that these sessions helps them to recognize ethical issues during patient encounters and practice medicine in a professional manner.

86% of our students were of the opinion that these sessions facilitate development of compassion and empathy with patients.

65% of students felt that these modules helps them to understand ethical issues concerning the patients better and avoid medico legal issues in the future.

65% of the students strongly agreed that the objectives of the session were met and majority (93%) felt that the time management was done adequately. 83% of the students felt that the time allotted for reflection writing was adequate and 87% were of the opinion that these session boosts their confidence to handle patients in the future. Majority (92%) felt the AETCOM sessions motivated them to learn more about the topic and 86% found these sessions interactive.

79% of the total study group suggested to provide opportunities for multiple exposures continuously throughout the course. 66% of the students felt the need of including more videos and role play sessions. 127 students (85%) suggested us to have more hospital visits for real patient encounters.

Discussion

Attitudes are individual's response to a situation⁸. Attitudes are central to a good doctor patient interaction which needs to be taught using a multidimensional approach. Apart from the good clinical knowledge and skills, a good physician requires excellent communication skills to develop a rapport with patients leading to better patient outcomes⁹.

Ethics which was earlier taught to students through a hidden curriculum leaving a lot to chance¹⁰. There is a growing conviction that medical education should include formal curriculum in ethics for ethical decision making in clinical practice¹¹.

To address these concerns and to promote explicit teaching in Attitude, ethics and communication, NMC through revised Graduate Medical Education Regulations has rolled out a longitudinal program that will help students acquire necessary competence in all the three domains. This shall enable graduate to function effectively in the four roles of leader and member of the health care team, communicator, life-long learner and professional as envisaged in the revised regulations¹².

AETCOM teaching has always been a part of hidden curriculum hence it is important to know about the perceptions of students towards the introduction of this module which might contribute to improve the delivery and quality of these sessions for better student understanding.

Observations in the study finds majority of the students felt that the topics covered were relevant, helps them to improve their communication skills and gain patient's confidence. Similar findings were reported by a study done by Meryn which reported that the module helps to improve communication skills and build a good relationship with patients¹³.

The sessions helped the students to recognize ethical issues during patient encounters and helps them to avoid medico legal issues in the future. Our findings are similar to a study which reveals the teaching of ethics as a part of AETCOM module will sensitize students and address the ethical dilemmas they might encounter in their clinical practice^{14, 15}.

Students revealed that the objectives of the sessions were met and time management was done adequately which motivated them to learn more about the topic. Student teacher interaction and group discussions were well appreciated by the students which is consistent with other studies¹⁶.

Study revealed that the students felt the need to include more videos and role play. The use of active learning methods promotes proper acquisition of knowledge, attitude and skills among the students¹⁷.

Conclusion

The AETCOM sessions were received positively by the students which would enable them to function effectively in roles of a leader and a member of health-care team, communicator, life long learner and professional as envisaged as in the revised Graduate Medical Education Regulations.

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