

Knowledge and attitude towards palliative care among medical students in a tertiary care centre in South Kerala

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Introduction

In developing countries like India, the ratio of aging population is increasing. Accessibility to healthcare services added to the burden of severe diseases, makes palliative care a necessity. The knowledge and attitude among the upcoming health care providers can act as a piece of information to make necessary changes in the future.

Methods

Study design: Cross-sectional study

Study population: Undergraduate and postgraduate medical students in the tertiary care centre who gave consent and responded of a tertiary care institution recognized by Medical Council of India in South Kerala

Sample size: According to study by Neethu et al, positive attitude towards palliative care is 84%, applying formula $4pq/d^2$, (taking absolute precision as 7) sample size was 150

Data collection and analysis procedure: Selection of the study participants was made as per inclusion and exclusion criteria. After obtaining the consent the survey was initiated via google form (online platform). A pretested and standardized questionnaire used in an earlier study modified to suit our scenario was instituted to the participants. The questionnaire was anonymous and unlinked. The final survey had 36 questions (14 for knowledge and 22 for attitude) apart from sociodemographic variables. Association between various qualitative variables were assessed using chi square test. The median score of knowledge was calculated (16) and those participants whose score more than was considered to have good knowledge and the rest were considered to have poor knowledge. For attitude, the tool has a 5 point likert scale, the score of the negative questions were reversed. Median was calculated (80) and those values above which was considered to have favourable attitude and those below were considered to have unfavourable attitude.

Results

Figure 1

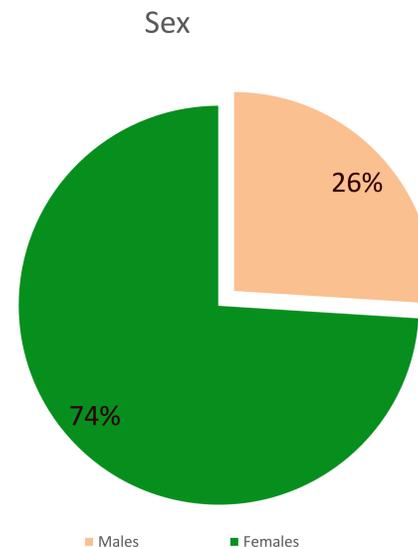


Table 1

| | | Knowledge | | Total | P Value |
|----------------------------------|-------|-----------|-------|--------|---------|
| | | Good | Poor | | |
| Age | <21 | 31 | 45 | 76 | <0.001 |
| | | 40.8% | 59.2% | 100.0% | |
| | >21 | 59 | 15 | 74 | 0.543 |
| | | 79.7% | 20.3% | 100.0% | |
| Sex | F | 65 | 46 | 111 | <0.001 |
| | | 58.6% | 41.4% | 100.0% | |
| | M | 25 | 14 | 39 | 0.543 |
| | | 64.1% | 35.9% | 100.0% | |
| Number of years in medical field | <3yrs | 48 | 57 | 105 | <0.001 |
| | | 45.7% | 54.3% | 100.0% | |
| | >3yrs | 42 | 3 | 45 | <0.001 |
| | | 93.3% | 6.7% | 100.0% | |

The mean age of the study participants was found to be 21.47 ± 1.66 years (range from 18 to 28). Most of the study participants were undergraduate students (95%). The mean score of knowledge among the participants was 15.97 ± 5.3 . Out of 150 participants, 90 (60%) had good knowledge and 60 (40%) had poor knowledge about palliative care. The mean score of attitudes among the participants was 79.47 ± 8.21 . Out of 150 study participants, 71 (47.33%) had favourable attitude and 79 (52.66%) had unfavourable attitude towards palliative care.

Conclusion

Palliative care has changed from helping patients at the end of life into a service focused, delivering supportive care to patients with life-limiting illnesses throughout the disease trajectory. The effective measurement of knowledge and attitude of the physicians is an important component of the evaluation of both education and practice. The study revealed that, even though the knowledge about palliative care improves with increase in experience, it is not the case in terms of attitude.

Thus, this study showed the gaps in the knowledge and attitude of future healthcare workers in the area of palliative care. There is a need to introduce or reinforce the study of palliative care in the medical curriculum.

References

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