

Evaluation of Personality Assessment Among Medical Students on Their Academic Performance

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Abstract

The journey of medical training is long and comes with an immense amount of financial and emotional stress to both the medical student and their family members. In order to avert all such untoward consequences and to minimize the financial load, it is essential that a right candidate with apt intellectual capabilities and personality should preferably opt for the field of medicine. In continuation, a competent medical undergraduate student not only requires a sound cognition base and good skills, but also requires a range of personal qualities. Despite the role of the personal attributes in predicting the performance of a medical student, the assessment of personality has not been given much importance. However, the available research findings on personality suggest that a systematic measurement of personality can provide significant information about the decision to select students for the medical profession or for their right specialty as a part of the postgraduation course. In conclusion, the personality of a medical student plays an important role in the academic performance and the clinical outcomes. Thus, it becomes the need of the hour to provide adequate emphasis toward the timely assessment of personality among medical students to improve academic outcome, career preference, and even upgradation of the quality of care offered to patients.

Keywords: Assessment, medical students, patient outcomes, personality

INTRODUCTION

The journey of medical training is long and comes with an immense amount of financial and emotional stress to both the medical student and their family members. The hardships become even more visible for those who fail to complete their training or realize that their personality does not match with the attributes expected of a medical professional.^[1] These students often get depressed, face frustration, and find it really difficult to get in terms with the daily ups and down of lives. In order to avert all such untoward consequences and to minimize the financial load, it is essential that a right candidate with apt intellectual capabilities and personality should preferably opt for the field of medicine.^[1,2]

PERSONALITY AND MEDICAL EDUCATION

With reference to medical education and patient care, personality refers to the attributes and behaviors displayed

by an individual, which is developed after the interaction between a wide range of elements (such as human tendencies, family atmosphere, type of upbringing, formal and informal education, etc.).^[2,3] In general, personality is of Type A (people with risk-taking behavior and who are prone to more stressful conditions) and Type B (those people who are less prone to stress, stay relaxed, and take life as it comes). The medical institutions have a major social responsibility toward shaping the career of medical students and improving the health outcomes and, thus,

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paying due consideration to personality development becomes a must.^[1-3]

In continuation, a competent medical undergraduate student not only requires a sound cognition base and good skills, but also requires a range of personal qualities such as positive attitude, interest toward the profession, human values, empathy, professional behavior, and a good personality.^[1,2] However, as professionalism has been recognized as one of the core competencies to be attained by the undergraduate medical student by most of the regulatory bodies, there is a definite positive move toward assessing and inculcating personality attributes among medical professionals.

PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT IN MEDICAL EDUCATION: NEGLECTED?

Despite the role of the personal attributes in predicting the performance of a medical student, the assessment of personality has not been given much importance. This could be because of the lack of clarity about the role of personality in the academic performance or clinical competence of the medical student and the quality of patient care.^[2,3] At the same time, a wide range of tools for personality assessments have been used over the years in different settings and thus there is some kind of an uncertainty about the tool and its correlation with the medical education and patient outcomes.^[3,4] It is preferable for personality assessment at the start of the undergraduate course and should be done by a central agency to check for the aptitude and other attributes to reach an inference about a student and their liking for the medical profession.

The personality assessment can significantly aid in the process of selection of freshly passed students for the medicine course who are willing to serve mankind and look for community improvement.^[2,3] These selected students will be more motivated to study medicine and other associated noncognitive attributes in order to become a better physician. In the long run, it will reduce the stress level among medical students and they will enjoy the learning process.^[1-3] The personality assessment can also be done prior to the enrollment in the postgraduation course, and the results will provide significant insights about the selection of an appropriate and suitable stream for a particular student.^[3-5]

In addition, some sections of medical fraternity people believe that there is no need to perform an assessment of personality, as it is a part and parcel of academic assessments and thus it just duplicates the overall process.^[2,3] Moreover, many people often feel that it is difficult to modify the personality of a medical student and thus they assess it. Often, people fake their personality based on their needs, so once again, there is no need to invest time and resources on the same.^[3]

However, the available research findings on personality suggests that a systematic measurement of personality can provide significant information about the decision to select students for the medical profession or for their right specialty as a part of the postgraduation course.^[2-5] Further, researchers have demonstrated that the measurement of the personality of an individual can turn out to be a good predictor tool for the academic performance, career preferences, as well as the outcome among patients.^[3,4]

METHODS FOR PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT

Personality assessment can be done either by the employment of conventional methods (such as an interview at the time of admission, the use of a letter of recommendation, personal statements or letter of intent, etc.) or with the help of standardized tools.^[3,5] The conventional methods, though they have been employed in different places, are not recommended universally as they are unstructured, lack uniformity and standardization, are subjective, and increase the possibility of being biased.^[3-5] On the contrary, standard personality tools (viz. California Psychological Inventory, Jefferson Scale of Empathy, etc.) have the potential to assess different aspects of personality and provide valuable evidence about career counseling, specialty choices, patient care, and academic outcome. Thus, the use of standard personality tools has to be advocated in the field of medicine for more valid and reliable results.^[3,4]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the personality of a medical student plays an important role in the academic performance and the clinical outcomes. Thus, it becomes the need of the hour to provide adequate emphasis toward the timely assessment of personality among medical students to improve academic outcome, career preference, and even upgradation of the quality of care offered to patients.

Ethical consideration

Not applicable.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

Contribution details

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