

FEEDBACK OF FOUNDATION COURSE IN STUDENTS OF FIRST MBBS COURSE IN A GOVERNMENT MEDICAL COLLEGE IN MAHARASHTRA

Swati Shah¹, Kalpana Kulkarni^{2*}, Varsha Sarode³, Monika Singh⁴

1. Associate Professor, Department of Physiology, 2. Associate Professor, Department of Pathology, 3. Associate Professor and Head of Department of Physiology, 4. Junior Resident III, Department of Pathology, B.J. Government Medical College, Pune, Maharashtra, India

*Corresponding author – **Kalpana Kulkarni**

Email id – drkalpanaketankulkarni@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: As per MCI guidelines, Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS) has started foundation course for the first year MBBS students. This study was planned with the objective of assessing the feedback of the students at the end of the foundation course. **Materials and methods:** It was a cross sectional descriptive questionnaire based study. Medical Education Technology (MET) cell of the institute planned one month foundation course for first year MBBS students. As per the Medical Council of India (MCI) guidelines, the program was divided into various modules viz: orientation, skill module, professional development & ethics module, sports & extra-curricular activities, language & computers. The course was taught by internal as well as external subject experts. Interactive sessions and workshops were taken. Role play and help of audio-visual aids were taken. A pre-validated feedback form in the form of questionnaire to be filled at the end of each session was given to all the students at the beginning of the course. Overall suggestions were also asked. Percentage of the students giving positive response was calculated. **Results:** The positive feedback of students ranged from 50-100% in various aspects of these modules. Twenty five percent students suggested that the duration of the foundation course should be reduced to 2 weeks instead of 4 weeks. **Conclusion:** The foundation course will help the students to develop communication skills and increase their confidence levels, teaching them professional skills and etiquettes and take them one step closer to becoming an Indian Medical Graduate.

Keywords: Foundation course, MBBS, Feedback

INTRODUCTION

The Medical Council of India (MCI) has revised the curriculum of undergraduate medical education. This is in order to train the Indian Medical Graduate (IMG) to become capable of recognizing "health for all" as a national goal. Communication skills is an area which is vital though often overlooked. The revised curriculum visualizes effective communication skill as a core area. Foundation course is one month coursework to orient medical students to MBBS program and provide them with requisite knowledge, communication, technical (including computers and electronic) and language skills. (1).

The selection of students to medical colleges in India is based on merit of the candidate at competitive entrance examinations. The selection criteria do not take care of non-cognitive abilities of the students. The entry level students are in the age group of 17-19 years. At this stage of the transition from high school to a professional course, these students may also face possible maladjustment to hostel life and food, and instruction in foreign language. Many students who might have pursued rote learning in high school find it difficult to cope with the different learning environment in a medical college.

Therefore, it is necessary to develop and implement students' orientation program at the entry level of MBBS program to acclimatize them to campus environment, familiarize with teaching programs, help adapt to the academic challenges as they move from high school into undergraduate programs. Such structured foundation course would help students coming from a very different learning environment to cope with the vast body of knowledge and skills required in the dynamic and rapidly changing health care system. Besides the development of essential knowledge and skills, the emphasis on training the undergraduate students in techniques of learning will motivate them to develop the habits of self-directed learning.

The objective of foundation course is to provide a basic set of knowledge and skills which will lay the foundation for the pursuit of further learning along the MBBS course as well as later in their medical career. Foundation course at entry level and the longitudinal program envisaged Graduate Medical Education Regulations (GMR 2017) in AETCOM module will help students acquire necessary non-cognitive competencies (1).

This study was conducted to assess the feedback of students on the foundation course to make necessary changes if needed.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

It was a cross sectional descriptive questionnaire based study. Admission of first year MBBS took place in August 2019. Faculty members of MET cell of the institute and faculty members from various departments designed a thirty days Foundation course for first year MBBS students.

As per MCI norms, the foundation course was divided into various modules: Orientation, Skill Module, Field Visits, Professional Development & Ethics module, Language & Computer skills, and Sports & extracurricular activities. After thorough discussion, the entire course work in these modules was designed as follows-

Firstly we conducted Orientation to students. In this we included various topics of Orientation to Medical Profession, MBBS Program & Curriculum, Principles of primary care (General + Community based care), doctor's role in society, working in health care team, Professionalism & Code of conduct and Time management.

In Skill Module, workshops on Communication Skills, First Aid, Basic life support, Hand Wash Knowledge, Ethics & Attitude, Coping Skills, Study

Skills, Memory Enhancement and Stress management were conducted.

In Sports and Extracurricular activities, we conducted yoga and meditation sessions, routine exercises, talent show on singing, dancing, poetry etc.

In Professional Development & Ethics module, lecture and interactive sessions on Medical Ethics & Etiquettes, Doctor's role in Society, Consequences of Unethical and Unprofessional Behaviour, Consumer Protection Act (COPRA), Disability Competency, Academic Ambience & types of learning, Introduction to Psychosexual development, Gender Sensitivity, Infection Control & Universal Safety Precautions, Biohazards & waste disposal, Introduction to IEC, Informed Consent were arranged. Sessions on Self Directed learning and Peer assisted Learning, the emerging teaching technologies were also arranged. Sessions on spoken English & Marathi (local language) and Computer skills were also arranged.

The sessions were taken by in-house subject experts. For some sessions, experts were outsourced from prestigious and renowned institutes too. All the sessions were interactive. Some of them were lectures, while some of them were conducted in the form of workshops. Help of role play and audio-visual aids were taken to make the session more interesting. In some of the sessions assignments and role play were given to students.

After verbal informed consent a pre-validated feedback form of close ended questions, made by MET unit faculty members was given to all the students at the beginning of the course. All the students were supposed to answer the questions at the end of each session. Overall suggestions were also asked.

The questions in the feedback included were:-

- 1) Was the content relevant to Objectives?
- 2) Was the presentation clear and informative?
- 3) Was adequate time provided for session?
- 4) Did you feel encouraged to utilise what was learnt in program?
- 5) Is the session important for MBBS course?
- 6) Should the session be elaborated during MBBS course?
- 7) Did you have prior knowledge on topic?
- 8) Did your knowledge increase after session?

The students were asked to write yes or no for each of the questions at the end of every session. Percentage of students saying yes and no were calculated for every single question for all the sessions.

Ethical considerations:

As this was questionnaire based study, informed consent from every student was taken although ethical clearance by the Ethical Committee was not obtained.

RESULTS

The orientation was conducted in these areas- professionalism and code of conduct, principles of primary care, doctor's role in society, working in health care team and time management.

The percentage of positive feedback given by students was 99-100% in content relevance, 98-99.5% in clarity of presentation as well as level of information in these presentations, 99.5-100% in adequacy of time for that session, 88-99% in encouraging utilisation of the information learned in the program, 90.5-99.5% importance of the session for MBBS course, 90.5-98% elaborating the session during the MBBS course, 90-98% prior knowledge on the topic and 92.5-99.5% increase in knowledge after session.

Similar positive feedback given by the students in other modules like the skill module (Table 1), professional conduct & ethics module (Table 2) and Language & Computer, Sports & Extracurricular and other topics module (Table 3) are recorded in tables.

TABLES:

TABLE 1: Percentage of positive feedback in students about Skill module

Q No.	First Aid	Basic life support	Hand wash	Communication Skills	Attitude & Ethics	Stress management
1	99%	99%	95%	99%	98.5%	99%
2	99.5%	95%	99%	95.5%	99%	98.5%
3	98%	97%	96%	88.5%	95%	99%
4	98%	100%	85%	95.5%	98.5%	95%
5	99.5%	95.5%	87.5%	98.5%	87.5%	99.5%
6	88.5%	100%	91.5%	96.5%	90.5%	96%
7	90.5%	88%	95.5%	86.5%	80%	94%
8	98.5%	99%	97.5%	90.5%	96%	96%

Table 2: Percentage of positive feedback in students about Professional development and Ethics module

Question No.	Biohazards & waste disposal	Infection control	Academic ambience	Memory Enhancement	COPRA	Unethical Behaviour & practices	Personality development
1	99%	100%	99.5%	100%	100%	99%	100%
2	99%	98%	98.5%	98%	98%	98%	99%
3	90%	97.5%	97.5%	99%	99.5%	99%	99%
4	92%	87%	95%	100%	98%	98%	95%
5	95%	90%	90.5%	97.5%	98%	99%	92%
6	96%	95.5%	92.5%	90.5%	70%	96%	85%
7	90.5%	92%	90%	90%	50%	90.5%	90%
8	95.5%	98.5%	90.5%	98%	98%	99%	98%

Table 3: Percentage of positive feedback in students about language and Computer, sports and extracurricular module and other topics

Q No.	Yoga	Language	Computers	Introduction to IEC & Informed consent	Psychosexual Development & Gender Sensitivity	Group dynamics	Peer assisted learning	Self directed learning
1	90%	99%	99%	99%	98.5%	99%	99%	98%
2	90%	98%	97.5%	98.5%	98%	98.5%	99%	99%
3	85%	88%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	98%
4	96%	95.5%	99%	97%	90.5%	97.5%	98.5%	95%
5	90.5%	98%	98%	96.5%	92%	99%	97%	97%
6	88%	99%	60%	95%	80%	89%	98%	95%
7	98%	98.5%	99%	80%	90.5%	90%	95%	80%
8	99.5%	99%	99%	99%	90%	95%	95%	95%

Suggestions given by students:

- 1) Duration of foundation can be reduced to 2 weeks instead of 4 weeks- 25% of students
- 2) Rest of the 2 weeks can be covered during the remaining one year course duration - 10%
- 3) Academics can be simultaneously started-1%
- 4) More duration for sports – 3%
- 5) Communication skills were very helpful -10%
- 6) Foundation course helped to increase the confidence-50%

DISCUSSION

Our study has analysed the percentage of students giving positive feedback for various topics covered in Foundation course. The course was divided into various modules as per MCI guidelines. Fifty percent of students accepted that their Communication skills improved, and is required to be reinforced throughout the curriculum. Ninety nine percent students were aware about basics of computers. Twenty five percent students suggested that duration should be reduced from 4 weeks to 2 weeks. Also 10% students felt that these lectures can be spread over one year duration.

Singh et al in 2007 found that the participation in the orientation course sessions and the feedback of newly admitted students was very encouraging at the entry level. However, the duration of course was for 7 days only (2). Another study by Mishra and Kar was of 10 days duration (3). In our foundation course the duration was for 1 month. Although 25% students in our study suggested that the course be

reduced to 2 weeks while another 10% felt that these lectures be spread over one year duration.

In a study by Shrimathi T in a Medical College, Tamil Nadu, the foundation course was conducted in the form of orientation program. In our study, the foundation course was conducted in orientation, skill, field visits, professional development, ethics, language, computer skills, sports and extracurricular activities. They found Positive feedback of 88.5-98.5% of the students regarding the objectives of the course, contents, presentation and the future value of the course (4). Our findings were comparable to their study as the positive feedback in our study was 88-100% in orientation module, 80-100% in skill module, 50-100% in professional development & ethics module and 80-99.5% in the language, computer, sports & extra-curricular activities. The positive feedback was taken regarding presentation, adequacy of time, importance, utility of the sessions, gain of knowledge and future value of the course. COPRA was one of the areas discussed in the professional development and ethics module. As we assessed positive feedback in terms of prior knowledge and knowledge gained after the session, the feedback reflected only 50% students with prior knowledge on COPRA which increased to 98% after the session on COPRA. This underlies the importance of foundation course once again.

Mishra and Kar studied perception of students about foundation course. Their foundation course comprised of communication skills, behavioural competency, coping with stress, basic clinical skills, computer knowledge and introduction to History of Medicine, National health scenario and Ethics and Professionalism (3). Our foundation course comprised of similar topics with addition of sports

and extra-curricular activities as per MCI guidelines. They studied four aspects of each session-content, teaching learning methods, relevance and involvement of students (3). While in our study, 8 aspects were assessed. They found that the course was appreciated by the students and more than 70% of students were satisfied with all the 4 attributes of the study (3). In our study, there was positive feedback of 99% students for all the sessions conducted for clear presentation with proper objectives and time duration.

Students were encouraged after the sessions taught. Especially Basic life support workshop encouraged 100% of students. Ninety nine percent students knew how to operate computers. Hence only 60% students accepted that it should be elaborated during MBBS course. More than 90% students agreed that their knowledge increased positively after all the sessions.

Five percent students suggested that academic teaching could have been simultaneously started along with Foundation course. All of the students gave positive feedback about the course, as they learnt many new things. Ninety percent students gave positive response in continuing the course for next batches. Overall, lectures were conducted as per the schedule. At the end of the foundation course, 90% students agreed that their confidence levels and communication skills improved. The sessions helped them to get acquainted quickly to the new environment.

Throughout the world, various colleges and universities develop such students' orientation program in order to help them adapt to the new academic and campus environment. Similarly medical students also need such programs to get adjusted to new environment and new academic subjects.

In India there are very few studies which have assessed the feedback of the foundation course. In fact MCI has introduced mandatory foundation course of one month from 2019 batch onwards throughout India. So in future, more studies on different aspects on foundation course from different institutes are encouraged so that necessary changes can be made to improve the course.

Limitation and Scope:

In our study, questionnaire had only 'yes or no' as options. Likert scale could have been used for better assessment of feedback of students. The study shows importance of improvement in confidence levels and faster adjustability of newly admitted students to

new environment due to foundation course. Further study involving detailed analysis of each of the sessions conducted in foundation course will be more helpful in planning the foundation course better in future. Such studies can be done every year and in all the institutes to improve the foundation course in India.

CONCLUSION

The foundation course will help students to develop communication skills and increase their confidence levels, teaching them professional skills and etiquettes and take them one step closer to becoming an Indian Medical Graduate.

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