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Research Article

AWARENESS ABOUT ETHICAL CONCEPTS AND PRACTICE OF BIOETHICS IN PHYSIOTHERAPY

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ABSTRACT

Background: Ethics is set of moral codes of conduct in day to day life. Similarly, Bioethics provides regulations of manner and behaviour with patients and human research subjects in healthcare profession. During Physiotherapy session's patient-doctor relationship is very extensive and detailed. Hence, Physiotherapists has to follow ethical framework while attending patient or performing research on human subjects. Hence, we decided to study the awareness level in bioethics, as well as to assess the extent of practice of bioethics in Physiotherapy professionals.

Method: This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted on 200 staff and students of Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam College of Physiotherapy, Loni Bk. A self-constructed questionnaire was used for assessing the level of awareness and extent of practice of Bioethics in Physiotherapy. First and Final year BPT students, Interns, Post graduate students and Staff of College are included in this study as, first to third academic year students do not interact with patients independently. The questionnaire was administered as per convenience to each participant and score was calculated. The questionnaire formed according to four components; General Awareness, Practice, Research and future utility. In scoring, '1' as minimum and '4' was maximum score as per options were provided in Likert scale style. After collecting the questionnaires participants were provided with ideal answer sheet for the factual information regarding questionnaire.

Result: Results observed from study shown that, Physiotherapy professionals in Institution based settings are not thoroughly aware about general concepts in Bioethics (52%) but, they use Bioethics in research as well as in day to day practice. (81% & 94%) Most of the participants agreed to include Bioethics as university level subject in both undergraduate as well as postgraduate curriculum. (97%) The most positively answered question was Q. No. 3 (100%) and most negatively answered question was Q. No. 9 (98 %)

Conclusion: The present study highlights importance of Bioethics education in all levels of healthcare education and concludes that, Physiotherapy professionals are not thoroughly aware of Bioethics but practice Bioethical principles in day to day practice.

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INTRODUCTION

Providing healthcare to all is a challenge in country like India, where diversity in cultures, geography and health condition is enormous. In such environments it is very important to train healthcare professionals for understand and cultivate multiple perspectives of healthcare and community acceptance.¹

Ethical education provides foundation for skills to identify moral conflicts and decision making ability within ethical margins.^{2, 3} In world medical negligence is considered as 8th leading cause of death. Also, in developing country like India, 5.2 million injuries due to medical negligence are reported.⁴

Current age provides patients with access to the internet which enables them to gather information relating disease or deformities, assessment as well as treatment. This creates state of confusion in mind of patient and makes providing healthcare a complex situation. Clinical ethics can provide solution to this situation. But for this to happen, incorporating ethics in everyday practice is very important.⁵

Physiotherapy is rapidly growing healthcare profession in India. Unfortunately, it lacks any centralized regulation system, legally Physiotherapy practice is governed by Consumer Protection Act and Protection of Human Rights Act and in case

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of research Indian Council of Medical Research has authorized regulations and ethical framework.^{6,7} The contact duration of Physiotherapist and patient is on average 1-2 hours including assessment and treatment session, which underline requirement of ethical conduct and awareness of patient's rights. Physiotherapy treatment does not include invasive procedures, which reduces harm to the patient's life markedly. But still, issues of confidentiality, legal consequences of misjudged treatment, interpersonal relationships, insurance and reimbursement issues, sexual harassment and many such concerns may affect practice of Physiotherapist.⁸ Following which it is important to assess the awareness about bioethics and extent of utilization in regular practice of Physiotherapy professionals. This study aims at assessing knowledge and practice of bioethics in Physiotherapy professionals in rural area of India.

METHOD

Total of 80 staff and students of Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam College of Physiotherapy at Loni, Maharashtra participated in the study. The students included final year undergraduate, interns and postgraduate students, as they can provide Physiotherapy service to the patients under supervision independently. We constructed closed ended questionnaire to assess awareness and extent of practice of bioethics based on four components included five questions each. Component '1' was consisted of general awareness, component '2' was directed towards everyday practice of Physiotherapy, component '3' was related to use of bioethical framework in research and last component '4' was intended to assess their views on future utility of bioethics in practice and education. The questionnaire was validated and revised according to discussions in between investigators and members of institutional ethical committee in Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam College of Physiotherapy.

The questionnaire was administered according to convenience by means of email to all participants. Received responses were analyzed statistically. The participants were provided with fact sheet including correct information and answers by email once, the responses were received. The analyzed data represented by graphs and tables and conclusion drawn.

RESULTS

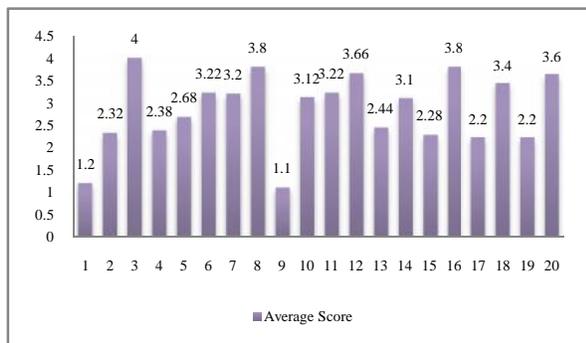


Chart 1 Average score of all questions in questionnaire

The Chart 1 displays responses to the questionnaire. The average scores to Question No. 1, 9, 17 and 19 were mostly negative and Question No. 3, 8 and 16 were received most of the positive responses from the participants.

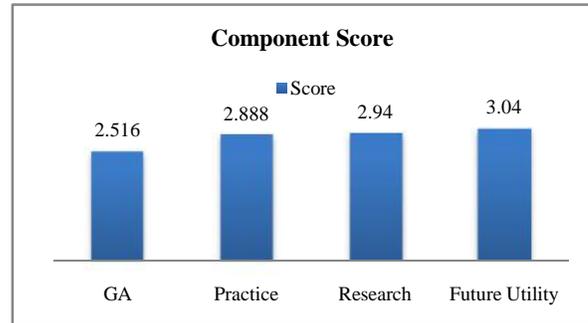


Chart 2 Average score of all four components

Chart 2, shows component wise responses of participants. The fourth component of future utility received most positive response while, component for general awareness was negatively responded by most of the participants. Components of research and practice were responded in similar average by participants.

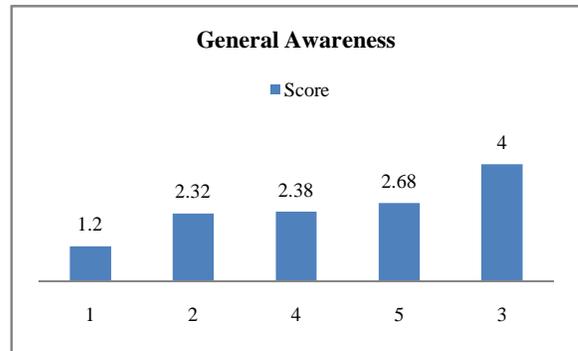


Chart 3 Response to the component of General Awareness in bioethics

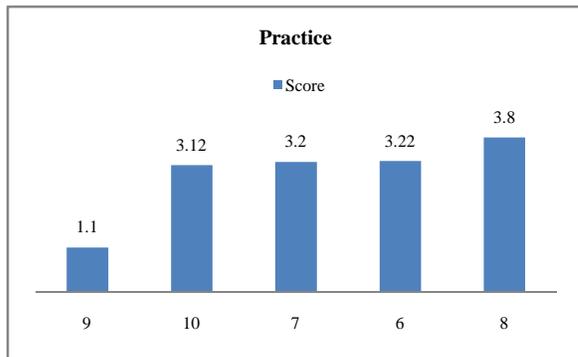


Chart 4 Response to Practice component of questionnaire

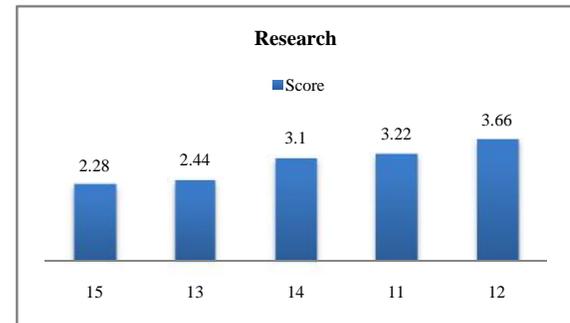


Chart 5 Response to the component of Bioethics in Research

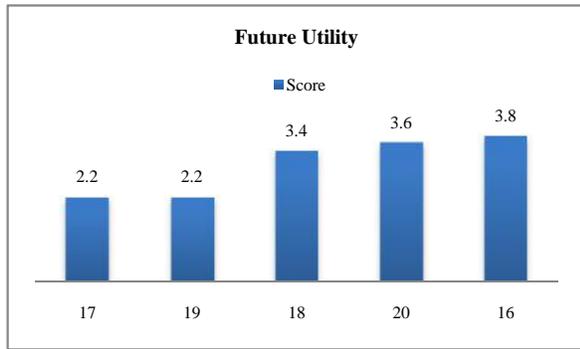


Chart 6 Response to the Future Utility component of questionnaire

The Chart No. 3, 4, 5 and 6 represents response to each component individually by the participants.

DISCUSSION

Present study reveals the recent trends of students in Physiotherapy profession. Ethical education and practice plays important role in healthcare, the patient-doctor relationship depends upon behavior, trust and morality. In the present study, components 1 and 2 were directly related to the current situation of Bioethics in Physiotherapy practice while, component 3 was associated with current structure and functioning of bioethical framework in Indian Physiotherapy profession. The last 4th component was designed in efforts to understand the view of Physiotherapists towards bioethics in relation to the Physiotherapy. Previous studies have concluded that, in healthcare education training in ethics is inadequate and ineffective.⁹ Still, this study on contrary shows that, healthcare professionals are interested in learning about Bioethics and need a comprehensive curriculum for incorporating Bioethics as a regular subject in all healthcare educational streams.

Though the ethical practices are largely depend upon the legal structure and guidelines of Indian Council of Medical Research in India, it is predominantly a self-awareness which enables a healthcare professional to practice benevolently and ethically in day-to-day practice. Hence, the implementation of Bioethics in health education for all streams of healthcare professions is necessity of this hour. This study was limited to students and staff of one institute, while large scale study will be more extensive and valuable to understand views of healthcare professionals in all available healthcare streams in India.

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