



## Attitude of Non-Psychiatry Residents towards Psychiatry: A Cross-Sectional Study

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### Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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### ABSTRACT

**Background and Aim:** The attitude of Non Psychiatry Post Graduate Residents towards Psychiatry is crucially important because of its influence on impressionable medical students and the large number of psychiatric patients who present to Non Psychiatry Doctors like General Practitioners. Present study was done with an aim to study the Non-Psychiatric Doctor Attitude towards Psychiatry.

**Material and Methods:** Present study was Conducted at two Major Institute: K. M School Post-Graduate medicine and Research and B.J. Medical College at Ahmedabad, Gujarat. At Both Institute Psychiatric lectures during 1<sup>st</sup> MBBS, lectures on Psychiatry during final MBBS and 2 week clinical rotation during final MBBS. Modified version of attitude towards Psychiatry questionnaire (Nielsen and Eaton, 1981) was the study instrument. The non- Psychiatry post-graduate students were asked to fill the Questionnaire. Questionnaire consists of 21 statements to be responded with one of the three alternate responses- Agree, neutral and disagree.

**Results:** Most P.G. thought that Psychiatry is making advancement and most was positive about psychoanalysis. Only 6.6% of P.G.s thought that Psychiatry is unscientific and inexact. With respect of therapeutic efficacy 83.8% would refer emotionally upset family members for Psychiatry consultation. Psychiatrist were considered as unclear thinker by 8% and overly apologetic in teaching. 40% agreed that psychiatrist tended to over analyze human behaviour. 27% of P.G.s thought that on an average psychiatrist make less money than other physician. 31% of P.G.s viewed that Psychiatry status as low compared to other specialties. 47% agreed that Psychiatry are often rightly seen by others as odd, peculiar and emotionally disturb them.

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**Conclusion:** Non Psychiatry Post-Graduates at a tertiary hospital in Gujarat have a moderately positive attitude to Psychiatry. However some erroneous beliefs are still prevalent among the consultants. The attitude of Non-Psychiatry consultants directly/indirectly affects the development of Psychiatry as a discipline.

*Keywords: Medicine; non psychiatry Post-Graduates; psychoanalysis; questionnaire.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Psychiatry training in Post-graduate medical curriculum is important in shaping knowledge and attitude of medical students toward subject. There has been emphasis on increasing duration of Psychiatry training in curriculum as well as emphasis on making it a separate subject with compulsory exam paper and not just part of internal Medicine [1]. However prior studies from west as well as India have revealed that majority of students harbour negative attitude towards Psychiatry as subject, psychiatric patients and psychiatrists themselves [2-3] Studies also suggest that as exposure to Psychiatry and medical education per say increases, attitude of students gradually changes towards positive side but this varies as per intensity of training and interest shown by students. [4-6]

Time pressure, frequent examinations, a high workload, poor pay, and physical and emotional problems experienced by trainees are among the reasons that have been given for the stressfulness of residency [7] Despite these obstacles, a rising proportion of Indian doctors seek Post-Graduate medical education due to the large number of doctors who are qualifying, increased remuneration and prestige for specialists, and an ever more competitive practice environment globally.7 However, despite an increase in the number of doctors who decide to specialize, a relatively small proportion choose to do so in Psychiatry [8]

Attitude of Non-Psychiatry consultants towards Psychiatry may affect their ability to promote Psychiatry as a discipline. Attitude is defined by Rezler as “an emotionally linked, learnt belief around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner.” [9] Attitudes are major determinants of behaviour , in this regard if we can manipulate the consultants and the future consultants' attitude in a positive way, it might help to encourage students to choose psychiatric as a future career and also promote Psychiatry as a discipline. [10]

There is very little in the current world literature with regard to the Non-Psychiatry consultants'

attitude towards Psychiatry. Present study was done with an aim to study the Non-Psychiatric Doctor Attitude towards Psychiatry.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Present Descriptive Cross-sectional study was Conducted at two Major Institute: K. M School Post-Graduate Medicine and Research and B.J. Medical College at Ahmedabad, Gujarat. At Both Institutions Psychiatric lectures during 1<sup>st</sup> MBBS, lectures on Psychiatry during final MBBS and 2 week clinical rotation during final MBBS. Modified version of attitude towards Psychiatry questionnaire Nielsen and Eaton, was the study instrument. The non- Psychiatry post-graduate students were asked to fill the Questionnaire. The subjects were selected by Random Sampling Method. Any participant with prior psychiatric illness history or ongoing treatment for psychiatric illness was excluded from study. Questionnaire consists of 21 statements to be responded with one of the three alternate responses- Agree, neutral and disagree. Items can be broadly divided into five broad clusters. Overall merits of Psychiatry; (ii) efficacy; (iii) role and functioning of psychiatrists; (iv) possible abuse and social criticism; and (v) career and personal rewards. The students' informed consent was verbally solicited, as completing the questionnaire implied acceptance of consent. The students were assured that their responses would remain anonymous, since the questionnaire did not include any information by means of which they could be identified. Permission and assistance were obtained from the tutoring lecturer present on that day, and approval was obtained from the teaching hospital Ethics Committee before conducting the study.

### 2.1 Statistical Analysis

The recorded data was compiled and entered in a MS Excel spreadsheet and then exported to data editor page of SPSS version 15. For all tests, the level of significance was set at 5%.

## 3. RESULTS

Out of the 200 questionnaire distributed 160 were return. However 24 questionnaires were

discarded leaving 136 responses for the analysis. The respondents were predominantly male 86% (Table 1). Most P.G. thought that Psychiatry is making advancement and most was positive about psychoanalysis. Year wise distribution was as follows: first year 13.2%, second year were 47.7%, Third Year 30.8%, and fourth year 8.08% (Table 2). Among the respondents POST-GRADUATES of Medicine were over represented. Anaesthesia, surgery and Gynecology POST-GRADUATES consisted 13.9%, 11% and 8.82% of the respondents respectively. Rests of the specialties were each represented by fewer than 10% of the total responses. (Table 3)

Most P.G. thought that Psychiatry is making advancement and most was positive about psychoanalysis. Only 6.6% of P.G.s thought that Psychiatry is unscientific and inexact. With respect of therapeutic efficacy 83.8% would refer emotionally upset family members for Psychiatry consultation. It was however disturbing to know that 12.5% viewed Psychiatry consultation as only rarely helpful. Medical skills were viewed important to the functioning of psychiatrist-this was evident as 90% did not agree entering Psychiatry is a waste of medical education. Vast majority also believe that today's physician do not have time to deal with emotional problem of patients. Psychiatrist were considered as unclear thinker by 8% and overly apologetic in teaching. 40% agreed that psychiatrist tended to

over analyze human behaviour.27% of P.G.s thought that on an average psychiatrist make less money than other physician.31% of P.G.s viewed that Psychiatry status as low compared to other specialties. 47% agreed that Psychiatry are often rightly seen by others as odd, peculiar and emotionally disturb them. Although 43.4% considered Psychiatry as an attractive discipline, as it is intellectually more compressive, 16.2% P.G.s choose Psychiatry as career.

122 (89.7%) considered that physicians do not have adequate knowledge and skills to treat Psychiatry patients. Common Psychiatry disorder, human behavior, psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, psychology, hypnotism and basics of human sexuality and effective parenting were area of interest Non-Psychiatry P.G.s wanted learn about.

86(62.3%) POST-GRADUATES reported that mental health professionals could treat mental disorder such as depression in a better way. 65(47.1%) agreed that prohibition is an appropriate public health policy for the control of Alcohol use disorder. 70(50.7%) POST-GRADUATES agreed that use of Psychiatry diagnosis such as depression lead stigma. 111(80%) POST-GRADUATES reported that they don't treat depression and anxiety disorder. 118(85.6%)POST-GRADUATES thought that their knowledge for treating Alcohol use disorder was inadequate.

**Table 1. Gender wise Distribution of study participants**

Gender	Number	Percentage (%)
Male	117	86
Female	19	14
Total	136	100

**Table 2. Distribution of study subject according to year of Post-graduate study**

Year of Study	Number	Percentage (%)
First	18	13.2
Second	65	47.7
Third	42	30.8
Senior	11	8.08

**Table 3. Distribution of study subject according to Specialty**

Specialty	Number	Percentage (%)
Medicine	23	16.9
Anesthesiology	19	13.9
Surgery	15	11
Gynecology	12	8.82
Radiology	11	8.08
Pathology	11	8.08
Others	45	33

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

Mental Health has been hidden behind the curtain of stigma and discrimination for a long time. Not only the mentally ill, even the mental health professionals are stigmatized [11] The increasing demand of psychiatrists and Psychiatry oriented physicians and surgeons cannot be overlooked because of the following reasons: a. Global sociopolitical changes have resulted in significant increase in psychiatric morbidity [12] b. According to W.H.O report psychiatric disorders are now among the top ten causes of economic burden of diseases while depression alone is second in the list. c. Concern for management of psychological problems in physically ill patients is increasing. d. Literature has shown significant association of psychiatric disorders with physical illness. e. Liaison Psychiatry is emerging as a subspecialty [13-15]

Attitude towards Psychiatry is dynamic and changes as per the exposure to subject and medical education in general. Attitude towards Psychiatry is also affected by strong negative socializing pressure from peer, family members and other Non-Psychiatry faculties as well which discourages student's interest in Psychiatry [16]

Most P.G. thought that Psychiatry is making advancement and most was positive about psychoanalysis. Only 6.6% of P.G.s thought that Psychiatry is unscientific and inexact. With respect of therapeutic efficacy 83.8% would refer emotionally upset family members for Psychiatry consultation. It was however disturbing to know that 12.5% viewed Psychiatry consultation as only rarely helpful. A study conducted in neighboring country of India in 1988 has also suggested that lack of interest for Psychiatry among medical students may be due to insufficient teaching hours, inadequate staff, lack of involvement of senior faculty, absence of provision for examination in the subject, lack of access to audiovisual aids, teaching of Psychiatry in mental hospitals and poor planning of curriculum. However, in contrast to some negative opinions on the part of medical students on the scientific standard, efficacy of treatment, and biopsychological/ biomedical perception of psychiatric practice described in previous studies, [17-19] our students felt that Psychiatry was an advancing scientific field of medical endeavour. This could partly be to their exposure to psychiatric syndromes and observation of patients' responses to effective biological and psychological treatments during their clerkship.

Medical skills were viewed important to the functioning of psychiatrist-this was evident as 90% did not agree entering Psychiatry is a waste of medical education. Vast majority also believe that today's physician do not have time to deal with emotional problem of patients. Psychiatrist were considered as unclear thinker by 8% and overly apologetic in teaching. 40% agreed that psychiatrist tended to over analyze human behaviour. 27% of P.G.s thought that on an average psychiatrist make less money than other physician. 31% of P.G.s viewed that Psychiatry status as low compared to other specialties. 47% agreed that Psychiatry are often rightly seen by others as odd, peculiar and emotionally disturb them. Few studies have reported contradictory findings that attitude of medical students became negative towards Psychiatry after completing Psychiatry training compared to those who did not receive training [20,21] Similar findings were replicated in present study where students were pessimistic about doing carrier in Psychiatry. Another worrying finding is students doubting scientific knowledge base of Psychiatry. This is often replicated finding from prior studies as well. [21,22]

The study has some limitations. Sample size was small. It was because of lesser number of full-time consultants working in the hospital.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

Non Psychiatry Post-Graduates at a tertiary hospital in Gujarat have a positive attitude to Psychiatry. However some erroneous beliefs are still prevalent among the consultants. The attitude of Non-Psychiatry consultants directly/indirectly affects the development of Psychiatry as a discipline. Further studies of such kind in a larger scale can help to determine whether changes in attitudes towards Psychiatry are needed among the Non-Psychiatry consultants.

#### **CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL**

The students' informed consent was verbally solicited, as completing the questionnaire implied acceptance of consent. The students were assured that their responses would remain anonymous, since the questionnaire did not include any information by means of which they could be identified. Permission and assistance were obtained from the tutoring lecturer present on that day, and approval was obtained from the

teaching hospital Ethics Committee before conducting the study.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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