

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A study of perception of first-year MBBS students toward orientation program and foundation course at entry level

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ABSTRACT

Background: Academic institutions throughout the globe conduct orientation programs for their students at entry level to help them adjust to the campus environment and academic programs. In India, students enter medical profession at a tender age of 17-19 years with dissimilar psychological characteristics, diverse expectations from the medical profession, and burden of various expectations from family and society. **Aims and Objectives:** To facilitate the transition from school phase to a professional course, the Medical Education Unit (MEU) of Gujarat Adani Institute of Medical Sciences (GAIMS) designed and evaluated an orientation-cum-foundation program for the first-year MBBS students. **Materials and Methods:** Three-day long orientation program and foundation course were organized by the MEU, GAIMS for the incoming first-year MBBS students of 2016-2017 batch. 112 students voluntarily participated in this cross-sectional study. Their feedback was obtained by a pre-designed and pre-validated questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale. **Results:** 107 students responded with the feedback about orientation program, whereas all the 112 students gave feedback on foundation course. 78% students responded positively for orientation, and 88% responded positively for foundation course. Students were largely satisfied with the program. **Conclusion:** Orientation and foundation program for MBBS students at the entry level, as suggested by the Medical Council of India, helps reduce students' anxiety and boosts their confidence.

KEY WORDS: Orientation; Medical Education; Medical Students; Professionalism; Ethics; India

INTRODUCTION

Academic institutions throughout the globe design and implement orientation programs for their students that transit from high school to undergraduate course, the core objective being to familiarize students with the campus environment and academic programs, and help them adjust to the same.^[1]

In India, students enter medical profession at the age of 17-19 years. At such a tender age, this cohort of students has dissimilar psychological characteristics such as fear of ragging, feeling of homesickness, peer pressure, parental pressures, language problems, and adjustments to hostel life and food. They come from different sociocultural backgrounds and have diverse expectations from the medical profession. On top of these, they are burdened with various expectations from family and society. In such a psychological state, they are expected to understand and appreciate the medical subjects.^[2]

To facilitate this transition from school phase to a professional course, a need for orientation program has been perceived by medical educationists all over the country. Furthermore, the Medical Council of India (MCI) has introduced a foundation

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course of 2 months in the “Regulations on Graduate Medical Education, 2012.”^[3] The need for such a program was also emphasized in the “Vision 2015” document^[4] released earlier by the MCI.

Previous studies show that most of the students do not have the preceding knowledge of the forthcoming professional demands except for a few internet, language, and time management skills.^[5] Hence, the Medical Education Unit (MEU) of Gujarat Adani Institute of Medical Sciences (GAIMS) designed and evaluated a three-day long orientation and foundation program for the first-year MBBS students, batch 2016-2017, with the objectives as suggested by the MCI in “Regulations on Graduate Medical Education, 2012” and “Vision 2015.”

MATERIALS AND METHODS

It was a cross-sectional study. Orientation program and foundation course were organized by the MEU, GAIMS for the incoming first-year MBBS students of 2016-2017 batch. Prior approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee of GAIMS. 112 students voluntarily participated in this three-day long program held from September 28, 2016, to October 1, 2016, and gave written informed consent for the same. Table 1 shows the details of the program. MEU faculty facilitated all the sessions and motivated students to participate actively. Students’ feedback was obtained by a pre-designed and pre-validated questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale. Statistical analysis was performed using MS Excel 2017 and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 21.

RESULTS

The students came to GAIMS from all corners of the Gujarat state. Of 112 students, 86 were from Gujarati medium schools, 25 were from English medium schools, and 1 from Hindi medium school. 109 students were from Gujarat Board schools, whereas 3 were from Central Board of Secondary Education schools.

Table 2 shows feedback of students on orientation program. Of 112 students, 107 students responded with the feedback, whereas 5 students did not respond. 74% ($n = 82$) students found the program interesting, whereas 81% ($n = 91$) students found the program nicely organized. 72% ($n = 80$) students were satisfied with the orientation program. 79% ($n = 88$) students said that they enjoyed the program and 86% ($n = 96$) students found the program impressive. Overall 78% students responded favorably, 16% students responded neutral while 4% students responded unfavorably for the program.

Table 1: Details of the orientation program and foundation course

Orientation program, Date: 09/29/2016	
Topic	Time
Welcome	09:00-10:00 AM
Visit Medical College and Teaching Hospital in Groups Accompanied by Seniors	10:00-01:00 PM
Lunch Break	01:00-02:00 PM
White Coat Ceremony	02:00-04:00 PM
Oath Taking Ceremony	04:00-04:30 PM
Open House and Feedback	04:30-05:00 PM
Foundation Course, Date: 09/30/2016	
MBBS Program in General	09:00-09:30 AM
Medical College and Hospital	09:30-10:00 AM
Introduction to Anatomy Department and Faculty	10:00-10:30 AM
Introduction to Physiology Department and Faculty	10:30-11:00 AM
Introduction to Biochemistry Department and Faculty	11:00-11:30 AM
Introduction to Community Medicine Department and Faculty	11:30-12:00 PM
Medical Ethics, Attitude, and Professionalism	12:00-01:00 PM
Lunch Break	01:00-02:00 PM
Introduction to Mentorship Program	02:00-03:00 PM
Time and Stress Management	03:00-04:00 PM
Introduction to Library Facility and Staff	04:00-04:30 PM
Introduction to IT Facility and Staff	04:30-05:00 PM
Foundation Course, Date: 10/01/2016	
Doctor-Patient Relationship	09:00-10:00 AM
Communication Skills	10:00-11:00 AM
Lifelong Learning Skills	11:00-11:30 AM
Open House and Feedback	11:30-01:00 PM

Table 3 shows feedback of students on foundation course. All the 112 students responded with the feedback. 89% ($n = 99$) students found the program useful, whereas 83% ($n = 93$) students found it informative. 78% ($n = 87$) students said that the course was effective. 96% ($n = 107$) students said that the program was helpful in getting oriented to the MBBS course while 94% ($n = 105$) students said that it helped boost their confidence. Overall 88% students responded favorably, 10% students responded neutral while 2% students responded unfavorably for the program.

Table 4 shows major themes that emerged from open-ended responses by students about the entire program. Students were happy that their seniors and college staff members were supportive. Their doubts were cleared and they felt relieved. Apart from some students having language problem and some finding the program exhaustive, students were largely satisfied with the program.

Table 2: Students' feedback on orientation program

Feedback	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
Orientation program (n=107) (%)					
Interesting	38	36	20	3	0
Nicely organized	39	42	13	0	1
Satisfied	27	45	23	1	0
Enjoyed	38	41	16	1	0
Impressive	61	25	9	1	0
Average	78		16	4	

Table 3: Students' feedback on foundation course

Feedback	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
Foundation program (n=112) (%)					
Useful	35	54	11	1	0
Informative	39	44	13	4	1
Effective	27	51	18	4	1
Helpful to get oriented with MBBS	60	36	4	0	0
Helpful in building up the confidence	54	40	4	1	1
Average	88		10	2	

Table 4: Major themes that emerged from students' open-ended responses regarding the entire program

It was a unique and lifelong memorable experience for me
 All my doubts were addressed in the program
 The program relieved my anxiety
 I am very happy to find helpful and supportive staff
 I am excited about the mentorship program
 I enjoyed company of seniors
 I am satisfied with the program
 I suggest that cultural programs may be added to this program
 I had some difficulty understanding in English and wish for more usage of local languages
 I found it a very long and exhaustive program

DISCUSSION

In India, students get admission to a medical college based on their merit at the qualifying National Eligibility-Cum-Entrance Test Undergraduate examination as per the Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Act, 2016.^[6] These selection criteria do not consider extracurricular abilities of these students. Furthermore, students belonging to diverse sociocultural, religious, economic, and geographic backgrounds come together at a medical college to pursue their MBBS. Such teenage students have varying psychological framework and may find it difficult to adapt to the new academic environment.

As medicine is a challenging profession that demands the study of a large volume of knowledge, acquisition of novel clinical skills, self-directed learning, ethical behavior, and professional attitudes, the MCI has suggested conducting a foundation course of 2 months for the first-year MBBS students with the aim of producing competent Indian Medical

Graduates.^[3] This inspired the MEU faculty at GAIMS, Bhuj, Gujarat to design, implement, and evaluate an orientation program-cum-foundation course for 2016-2017 batch of first-year MBBS students.

The enthusiastic participation of newly admitted students in various sessions during the program and their feedback were very encouraging. The feedback undoubtedly indicated that students were very happy and satisfied with the program. Similar results were obtained by various previous studies.^[7-10] A structured foundation course, such as ours, can help alleviate students' worries, and help them cope with forthcoming professional demands. We support the MCI's decision on mandatory foundation course for first-year MBBS students.

Limitations and Direction for Future Research

As all the 150 students of the batch 2016-2017 did not attend the program, we could not study the perception of absentees. Although it was explained in the Gujarati language, there is minor possibility that students did not understand the feedback form properly as majority of the students were from Gujarati medium schools. Similar studies about orientation program can be conducted for second year, third year-part one and third year-part two MBBS students, interns, and postgraduate medical students.

CONCLUSION

Orientation and foundation program for MBBS students at the entry level, as suggested by the MCI, helps reduce

students' anxiety and boosts their confidence. It facilitates their smooth transition from high school to an undergraduate medical course.

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