

Effect of personality development program for medical and nursing students: A pilot study

Naresh Nebhinani¹, Assistant Professor, Surajit Ghatak², Professor, Kuldeep Singh³, Additional Professor, Sanjeev Misra⁴, Director, Professor, Om Lata Bhagat⁵, Assistant Professor, Ritu Garg⁶, Consultant Psychologist
Department of Psychiatry¹, Department of Anatomy², Department of Pediatric³,
Department of Surgical Oncology⁴, Department of Physiology⁵,
NAMS Center for Research in Medical Education
All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, 342005, India
Consultant Psychologist⁶, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

Background: Personal development is an ongoing but complex process and it is crucial for the medical educator to recognize the trait and design the training for optimal development of students. Though importance of human personality is widely recognized for functional efficiency of an individual and organization, but its recognition is grossly missing from medical curriculum.

Aim: To organize and evaluate the 'Personality Development Program' for medical and nursing students.

Methods: First year medical and nursing students were recruited through total enumeration method. 'Personality development program' was conducted by a trained psychologist and it was evaluated through 'partially open ended anonymous structured feedback'.

Results: Majority of the students found this program relevant, comprehensive and purposeful. Again majority had perceived some improvement in their confidence and level of communication, interpersonal relationships, planned time schedule, emotional confidence, and better stress management. They have also narrated shortcomings of the program along with some constructive suggestions.

Conclusion: This preliminary attempt for personality development was highly appreciated by the students as well as their supervisors as a means to professional development. It further emphasizes the vital need of ongoing programs both for enhancing personality and professionalism.

Key words: Personality development, enhancement, medical and nursing students

Correspondence : Dr. Naresh Nebhinani, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, All India Institute of Medical Science, Jodhpur, Rajasthan-342005, India
E mail : drnaresh_pgi@yahoo.com

Introduction

The real purpose of the education is to equip students with the potential to meet challenges in life. The Medical Council of India is also emphasizing to produce more competent and skilled medical personnel (1). Becoming a good doctor or nurse not only needs acquiring medical knowledge and mastering clinical skills but also learning professional attitude, emotional stability, and interpersonal as well as communication skills(2-4). The importance of human personality on the overall efficiency of an individual and organization has been widely recognized(5).

Students' personality development is really a felt need in our newly built tertiary care medical institution. There is a definite and vital role of professionalism based on personality development programs especially in their early adjustment, understanding about medical stream, and more importantly helping them to grow more effectively in all the spheres of life and to actualize their inherent potentials. Despite these facts, this area remained seriously under recognized and under addressed. It has given us an impetus to organize and evaluate the 'personality development program' for our medical and nursing students.

Methodology

During September 2012 and September 2013 our institution has organized a 'Personality development

program' for medical and nursing students at their first entry. In this program first year students from MBBS and BSc Nursing curricula streams were recruited through total enumeration method. Study was approved by the college authorities and informed consent was taken from all the participants.

It was aimed to help our students understand the concept of all round development of personality and to make them aware of various methods, approaches and applications of personality development. Key resource faculty was RG (an author in this manuscript), a psychologist with vast experience of organizing such programs in academic as well as in corporate settings along with two resource facilitator from respective clinical and pre-clinical departments.

Program consisted of following five sessions, each of three hours, and one session per day (**Table-1**)

Each session included a brief presentation on the topic, its relevance and applications, followed by lively and interesting interactive activities between medical and nursing students and facilitator. Only one session was conducted every day. Resource person was coordinating every session in smaller groups and motivating everyone for active participation. Empathy was the key word which was emphasized to be developed as a professional attribute.

Table-1: Program details

Session	Program details
Session-1	Personality (types and development) Attitude Self introduction
Session-2	Emotional intelligence Conflict management Empathy
Session-3	Motivation and motivators Goals Persistence
Session-4	Time management Leadership
Session-5	Team building Interpersonal relationship Self actualization

Program evaluation was done through 'partially open ended anonymous structured feedback' from all the participants in which both program content as well as outcomes were thoroughly evaluated. Program content was assessed on following parameters: relevance, understandability, comprehensibility, flow, utility of program, activities/ areas which were most liked and least liked, and suggestions for improvement in existing program. Outcomes were evaluated through following parameters: participant's ability to conduct themselves better, having better interpersonal relationships, developing and complying with a comprehensive schedule, having better control of their emotions while dealing with the patients, applying stress management techniques, facilitate learning, enhancing their confidence,

inculcating positive attitude in newly introduced patients, and better adaptation in new situations related to patient management and care. Finally establishment of communication with the parents or relatives of young patients such as pediatric age group.

Analysis was done using the SPSS version 15.0 for Windows (Chicago, Illinois, USA). Frequencies with percentages were calculated for nominal and ordinal variables.

Results

Total participants were 172, of them 119 were MBBS first year and 53 BSc Nursing first year students. We expected their concern about confidentiality especially in receiving genuine feedback; no identifiable information was obtained.

Program evaluation

As shown in **Table-2**, majority of the students found the content relevant, comprehensive, easy to understand, well paced, useful, and possibly purposeful in their future professional practice. Program had good balance between presentation, discussion and active participation aiming it relevant and purposeful activities. Findings were comparable among medical and nursing students.

Outcome evaluation

After this program, most of the students started conducting themselves

better and developed better interpersonal relationships, time-table, emotional regulation, stress management, self evaluation, leadership skills, team approach, adaptability, confidence to some extent and empathy to the patients. Similarly majority of students met other personal learning goals with the help of this program and established an

environment conducive to facilitate learning & knowledge and appropriate skills to some extent and felt improvement in their academic performance. Outcome findings were also comparable among medical and nursing students. Details are mentioned in **Table-2**.

Table-2: Feedback for personality development program (N=172)

Variable	Frequency (%)		
	Disagree	Okay	Agree
<i>Program Evaluation</i>			
Program content was relevant	4 (2.3)	46 (26.7)	117 (68)
Program content was comprehensive	3 (1.7)	63 (36.6)	102 (59.3)
Program content was easy to understand	24 (14)	146(84.9)	170 (98.8)
Program was well paced	5 (2.9)	62 (36)	100 (58.1)
Breaks were sufficient	2 (1.2)	55 (32)	115 (66.9)
Has good mix between listening and activities	6 (3.5)	28 (16.3)	138 (80.2)
Activities were useful learning experiences	2 (1.2)	36 (20.9)	134 (77.9)
<i>Outcome Evaluation</i>	Not achieved	To some extent	Fully achieved
Conducting myself better	4 (2.3)	121 (70.3)	45 (26.2)
Developed better inter personal relationships	6 (3.5)	94 (54.7)	71 (41.3)
Developed a comprehensive timetable/ schedule	41 (23.8)	86 (50)	43 (25)
Following timetable/schedule prepared for myself	38 (22.1)	101 (58.7)	29 (16.9)
Having better control over my emotions	20 (11.6)	82 (47.7)	67 (39)
Applying appropriate techniques for stress management	20 (11.6)	85 (49.4)	64 (37.2)
Established a climate to facilitate learning & knowledge	7 (4.1)	100 (58.1)	62 (36)
Confidence level is enhanced	8 (4.7)	88 (51.2)	73 (42.4)
Became a better team member	10 (5.8)	96 (55.8)	64 (37.2)
Having a positive attitude about the life	3 (1.7)	47 (27.3)	119 (69.2)
Ready to adapt better with condition posed to me	7 (4.1)	68 (39.5)	96 (55.8)
Better self evaluation	4 (2.3)	66 (38.4)	98 (57)
Understood the importance of effective leadership	4 (2.3)	64 (37.2)	102 (59.3)
Met other personal learning goals	5 (2.9)	94 (54.7)	69 (40.1)

Greater proportion of students liked the activities, interactive sessions, trainer's approach, social skills and teamwork applications. Some of the students reported insufficient time duration (for each session as well as program), lack of individual approach (specifically to each student separately), and shorter breaks as major shortcomings of this program. Many students also gave several suggestions to improve forthcoming programs like to increase number of sessions and program duration, interactive activities; to put emphasis more on professionally oriented approaches, communication, and active participation by each student. They have suggested to include some areas in coming programs like social affairs, teen issues, friend selection, hobbies, college life, ideologies, body language, yoga and meditation. Majority expressed the need for such activities on regular basis to motivate them constantly for sustaining the personality development and actualizing their potentials to become better professionals.

Discussion

Personality is often defined as an organized combination of attributes, motives, values, thoughts, feelings, and behaviours unique to each individual. Effective Personality Development Programs can carve them better in dealing with the challenges of day to day life more effectively. It further helps them to actualize their potentials. As skills like problem solving, logical thinking, leadership and communication are very

important for every day dealings (6). Like others, in our institution too, students are coming from all over the India with different socio-cultural and educational background and commonly they are not matured and prepared to face challenges in day to day life and also less equipped to deal with the challenges of a professional course.

Therefore effective and enriching education is of vital importance for holistic development of our students. Positive approach, healthy environment and regular interactions among children, parents, teachers and society enhance their personality growth and prepare them to face challenges in day to day life (6).

It has been argued that health professional students may show their dissatisfaction towards a course of studies due to certain personality traits. It is a matter of intense research to identify those traits which may help in selecting medical or nursing students (7). However, personality assessment is not practised during entry into professional course in India. Therefore, institutes offering professional course have to adopt methodology in their curriculum to not only develop professional skills but also prepare students to cope up with demands of the course and its application later in their life, and culmination as a better professional. When students would be more aware about their capabilities, strengths and weaknesses, there would be more scope to improve upon themselves and lesser risk of substance abuse, depression, and suicidal behaviours in

future. The program will better prepare them for skills necessary for optimal training toward skills and competencies as required by a medical professional. Hence this personality development program was an attempt for holistic growth of future physicians.

In index study majority of the medical as well as nursing students found this program relevant, comprehensive and useful. Again majority had perceived some improvement in their confidence, interpersonal relationships, time schedule, emotional regulation, and stress management. Greater proportion of students appreciated interactive activities and trainer's approach. They have also narrated shortcomings of the program and have given several suggestions to improve forthcoming programs by increasing number of sessions and program duration, interactive professional activities, and active participation by all. They have also expressed vital need of ongoing programs for personality development.

Mittal *et al* (8) have reported the importance of foundation program for 2nd year medical student. In view of lack of available literature on personality development, we could not compare our findings. Therefore generalizability of our findings needs caution and replication in wider population samples.

Our institution has appreciated the positive effects of this program for medical and nursing students. We are in path to devise an ongoing program for professional development. It will help our

students in understanding various methods, approaches and applications of personality development as required to become a good professional. It will also aid in their complete physical, social, cognitive, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development. With such organized ongoing efforts our institute will be able to contribute competent future medical professionals with ability to cope up with unforeseen situations and demands.

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