

## Awareness And Knowledge of Medical Law And Ethics Among Clinical Students in Dentistry – A Original Article

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**Abstract:** In recent years, teaching of law and ethics in medical practice has emerged as a core curriculum in both Undergraduate and postgraduate medical education in many developed countries such as the US, Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand.. Research and discussion papers on clinical ethics and reports on medico-legal cases now constitute a significant contribution to the expansion of medical literature, which have enriched our knowledge in the areas with widening scopes. Medical and Dental students are now expected to have knowledge and understanding of the principles of medical ethics and the legal responsibilities of the medical profession. They should also have the ability to recognize complex legal and ethical issues arising from clinical practice and sound decision-making skills to resolve them. Often there is no single or universal answer to such issues. The views within the medical profession as well as the public change constantly with time and vary from one country to another. It is therefore prudent for doctors to keep themselves informed about the current views, and when in doubt, be ready to consult their peers, lawyers and ethicists. This study has been designed to assess the level of awareness of medical law and ethics among clinical students of dentistry.

**Keywords:** Medical Ethics, Dental Ethics, Awareness among Medical students, Awareness among Dental students

### I. Introduction

The Word 'ethics' derived from Greek word

"Ethos" meaning custom or character. Ethics is the philosophy of human conduct, by which problems of behavior can be solved. It's the science of what is morally right.

Ethics is defined as science of morals of moral principles of right and wrong, specifying rules of right behaviour. It involves moral duties and obligation of dentist towards his patients, professional's colleagues and to society.

### Aims & Objectives

To assess the level of knowledge and awareness in medical and dental ethics among clinical students of Dentistry.

### II. Materials and methods:

The study was conducted in Ragas Dental College and Hospital, Uthandi, Chennai In The Academic Year 2016 - 201. This survey study consisted of a typed questionnaire which contained a total of 10 questions based on duties and responsibilities of the doctor, rights and responsibilities of patients. A total of 150 students participated and answered the questions. All the students entered the clinical side only selected and were segregated randomly from third, fourth and internship years. 50 students from each year at a time were given the questionnaire and asked to answer after explaining the purpose. Based on the answers obtained the data was analyzed. The overall percentage of correct answers was calculated for each year and the results were drawn. The questions were

1. During tooth extraction a small apical third root piece has been left inside the socket as you know that it is not going to cause any post operative problem to the patient. Will you inform the patient about the tooth remnant?

- a. Yes
- b. No

2. A known HIV patient comes to your clinic for dental treatment you
  - a. Will treat the patient
  - b. Will refuse to treat the patient
  
3. Before undergoing any major dental treatment you will obtain consent from the patient in a
  - a. Typed consent form
  - b. Patients own hand written consent form
  
4. You are the chief doctor of your own clinic. In your absence, your Dental assistant administers a wrong drug to a patient and the patient subsequently develops complications. The patient files a petition in court. In this circumstance who is responsible for the mishap occurred.
  - a. You, the Chief Doctor
  - b. Dental assistant
  
5. A patient comes to your clinic for placement of implant tooth. It cost about 15,000/- but the patient says he can afford only 5,000/- you can refuse the treatment.
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
6. A patient who has been posted for surgery gives blood sample. During routine blood investigations it is found to be HIV positive in dot test which is not a confirmatory test. What will you do?
  - a. Tell the patient about the dot test and Counsel the patient for another blood sample to send for Western blot confirmatory test.
  - b. Tell the patient to give blood sample for other test and will sent for Western blot Confirmatory test.
  
7. A general physician undergoes tooth extraction in your clinic. After the procedure gets completed, you will collect the fee.
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
8. After completing BDS you can stick a Red Cross label indicating doctor on your vehicle. Is that ethically correct
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
9. A and B are friends. After completing BDS, both of them planned to start private practice independently. A gives advertisement in local cable channel and newspaper displaying his name, educational qualification and treatment offered for various diseases. B gives personal interviews in local cable and news papers with his patient's photographs and he says that he is an expert in treating various diseases.
  - A. A is Ethical
  - b. B is Ethical
  - c. Both are Ethical
  - d. Both are unethical
  
10. One of your 60 years old cardiac patients has been diagnosed as oral cancer and the prognosis is going to be bad. In this circumstance you will.
  - a. Tell the diagnosis and prognosis to the patient without hiding
  - b. Tell only the diagnosis and will inform the son or daughter about the prognosis
  - c. Tell the diagnosis correcting but tells that the prognosis is going to be good.
  - d. Both B and C

### **III. Results**

Totally 150 students participated and answered the questions. The overall percentage of correct answers given by each year has been shown in the table1 and it is plotted in chart 1.

**Table:1**

<b>Year Of Student</b>	<b>Overall Percentage</b>
Iii Year Students	60%
Iv Year Students	70%
Internship Students	50%

The following aspects of ethics had been framed as questions  
Question no 1 and 2 –Duties of the doctor towards his patients  
Question no 3 and 6-Rights of the patients  
Question no 4-Responsibilities of a doctor towards his patients  
Question no 5 and 9-Rights and privileges of the doctor  
Question no 7-Duties of a doctor towards his colleagues  
Question no 8-Misusing the Red Cross symbol  
Question no10-Confidentiality and professional secrecy

### **Explanations**

For the question 1 –It is the duty of the doctor towards the patient to explain the procedures and the actual progress of the situation. A root remnant which was left inside the socket should be informed to the patient.

For the question no2-It is the duty of the doctor to treat a known HIV patient. He should not refuse to treat. The doctor should take all the precautionary steps while treating those patients.

For the question no3 and 6- It is the rights of the patient to give consent before undergoing any treatment. At any circumstance it is always better to take a patients own hand written consent form signed by the patient and also by his relative. Whenever a blood sample of a patient taken, the patient should be informed that it will undergo for routine HIV test also. If it is found to be HIV positive by a unconfirmatory test the patient should be counseled well and with his consent only the second blood sample should be taken for investigations. If the patient is not willing for second test you cannot deny the treatment or the patient but consider the patient is HIV infected and follow all the precautionary steps while treating the patient.

Question no 4-Whenever any mishap occurs in your absence at your clinic, the chief doctor only responsible for that according to the law. If it is a college the management will hold the responsibility for the mishap that occurs.

Question no 5 –It is one of the rights of the doctor to refuse the treatment when the patient is not able to pay

Question no 7-It is the duty of the doctor to treat his fellow colleagues without collecting any fee. If the treatment is costly and involves any material charge you can ask the doctor to pay only for the material but the doctor fee should not be collected.

Question no 8-Only Red Cross society and Army people during war time can use the Red Cross symbol. Doctors should use only the symbol recommended by WHOM.

Question no 9-Only A is ethical and B is unethical because a practitioner is allowed to make formal information through press or mass media in the following circumstances

1. on starting practice
2. On informing the type of practice
3. on resumption of another practice
4. On succeeding to another practice
5. on temporary absence from duty
6. on changing address

Apart from situations mentioned above any other form of advertisement and private interviews with a intention of attracting patients is considered unethical.

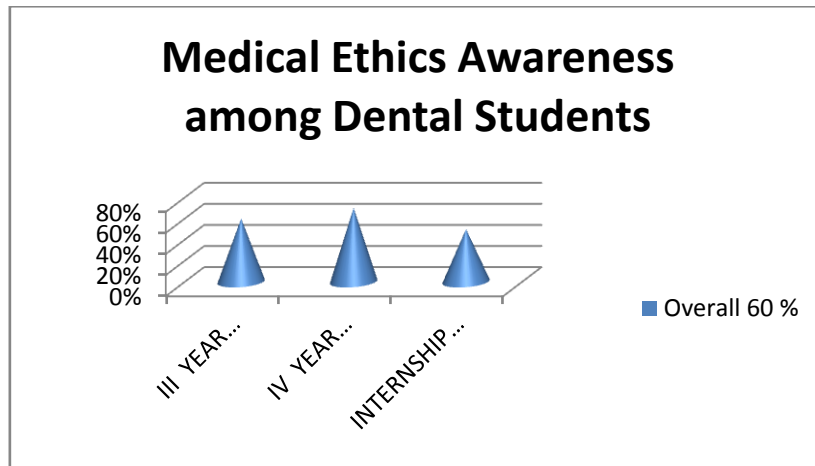
Question no 10-It deals with professional secrecy and confidentiality. Generally the true situation should be revealed to the patient regarding their treatment and outcome. But if the news about true situation and the outcome are going to be detrimental for the patient's health it is always better to tell the present situation to the patient and the out come is going to be good. It is very important that the true outcome of the disease should be completely revealed to one of the patients close relative like Husband or sons and daughters.

The percentage of awareness for third year students is 60%

The percentage of awareness for third year students is 70%

The percentage of awareness for third year students is 50%

Total percentage of awareness for all the clinical students (i.e. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and internship students) is 60%



#### IV. Discussion

It is now a firmly established belief that legal and ethical Considerations are integral to medical practice in the planning for the care of the patient. With the advances in medical sciences and growing sophistication of the legal framework in modern society as well as increasing awareness of human rights and changing moral principles of the community at large, doctors and other healthcare workers alike are now frequently caught in difficult dilemmas in many aspects arising from daily practice. Examples are plenty such as the duty to respect informed consent, truth-telling, breach of confidentiality, disclosure of medical errors, rationing of scarce health resources, biomedical research, organ donation, etc. Besides, there is also growing anxiety both within the medical profession and in the community regarding increasing trends of complaints and lawsuits against doctors. From the bitter experience of many doctors who were engaged in complaint or lawsuits in the past, many of them had resulted from failing of their doctor-patient communication skill or inadequate ability to comprehend and resolve dilemmas in clinical settings. Medical ethics has developed into a well based discipline which acts as a "bridge" between theoretical bioethics and the bedside<sup>1</sup>.

The goal is "to improve the quality of patient care by identifying, analysing, and attempting to resolve the ethical problems that arise in practice<sup>2</sup>". In addition to our moral obligations, doctors are also bound by laws and official regulations which form the legal framework regulating medical practice<sup>3</sup>. It is now a universal consensus that legal and ethical considerations are inherent and inseparable parts of good medical practice across the whole spectrum. The disciplines of law and ethics in medical practice overlap in many areas and yet each has its unique parameters and distinct focus<sup>4</sup>. The above study shows that the knowledge and awareness in medical law and ethics for clinical students of dentistry have not been properly understood by the students. It is not only professional skills which makes a person complete doctor but the awareness about medical law and ethics is mandatory so that the doctor can practice and serve the society more efficiently.

#### V. Summary And Conclusion

Ethics may be considered as hills of help for modern man for, more he studies ethics and more he uses ethical concept as guides more he is strengthened in character. Ethic attempts to determine what conduct or what actions ought to be approved or disapproved.

*"Ethics is not an object; it cannot be bought, sold or bartered, but it can be shared"*

A questionnaire based survey was conducted among clinical students in dentistry to assess the level of awareness in medical and Dental ethics. Based on the results obtained it was clearly revealed that the knowledge and awareness about medical and Dental ethics has not been thoroughly understood by the clinical students of dentistry. This study strongly suggests that there is a need to add medical law and ethics as an individual subject, so that the students can easily understand and will have a good awareness about the same which is necessary for the profession.

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