

Research Interest Among Undergraduate Students - An Observational Study

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Background: Medicine and research go hand-in-hand. Research plays a crucial role in the development and advancement of evidence-based medicine. It is considered as one of the important aspects of medical training, as the involvement of budding physicians in health research represents a valuable contribution in successfully linking basic scientific research with clinical practice. The modern undergraduate curriculum recommends early exposure to health research. Through this study, we intend to assess the knowledge, attitude, practice, and barriers to research among the undergraduate students belonging to all disciplines of healthcare domain.

Methodology: This is a cross-sectional observational study conducted among undergraduate students in the field of health sciences. A self-administered questionnaire containing 12 questions was circulated through a Google form to all eligible students across South India. The results were analyzed and expressed as numbers and percentages.

Results: We received a total of 175 responses. Of these, 146 were medical students and 29 were paramedical students. The majority of students (137/175 - 76%) were interested in clinical research. However, only 61 students (34%) were engaged in research-related activities. Almost 133 students (76%) felt their institution had adequate research opportunities. Likewise, a small number of students (37/175 - 21%) felt their professors did not encourage scientific research activities. Around 78% (137 students) were interested in patient follow-up studies. Majority of students (118/175 - 67.4%) considered that research would help them in pursuing higher education. A significant number of students also stated that involvement in research improved their interest in the subject (111/175 - 63.4%), and critical thinking (77/175 - 44%). They also highlighted several barriers against research participation, including lack of time, knowledge, research group, proper mentoring, and funding. From students' points of view, the hindering factors in conducting research activities were lack of proper guidance (102/175 - 58.3%) and time (77/175 - 41.7%) (Fig.1). Out of 175 students, only 20 (11%) had publications in indexed journals.

Conclusion

Undergraduate students are interested in research, consider research experience as valuable, and beneficial for future career development. Conducting workshops on research methodology, forming institutional journal clubs and proper mentoring would facilitate strengthening research activities among the undergraduate students.

Keywords: Physician, Curriculum, Questionnaire

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