Prevalence of mental distress among medical students: Curricular innovations to reduce distress among students

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Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease”.

-(WHO)

Depression, anxiety, and stress demonstrate the mental health of an individual. Previous studies have shown high rates of depression, anxiety, and stress amongst medical students throughout the world. It is well accepted that mental distress of medical students is mainly associated with increased academic burden. But it is largely unexplored that which curricular changes are essential to reduce academic burden and enhance the well-being of medical students.

The objective of this study was to provide ideas to medical educators to create necessary changes in curriculum to improve the mental well-being of students.

This study was done in two phases and utilized a mixed methodology. In Phase one the validated DASS-21 questionnaire was used. In Phase II, focus group was carried out to explore the possible reasons behind the mental distress among students.

In conclusion, this study revealed that high rates of depression, anxiety, and stress among students is mainly academically related. Interventions targeting to reduce academic burden i.e. engaging curriculum, feedback and reflection, early introduction clinical subjects, opportunities for extracurricular activities and proper student support service should be initiated to improve the mental health of students.

Main reasons of mental distress as perceived by students in focus group


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