Abstract

Introduction: Holistic Health is an approach to life. Rather than focusing on illness or specific parts of the body, this ancient approach to health considers the whole person and how he or she interacts with his or her environment. Holistic Health is related to healthy diet and physical exercise, salutogenesis, health promotion, meditation, yoga, rehabilitation techniques, exercise and trauma care, biosciences in rehabilitation and prevention of diseases.

Objective: To determine perception and practices regarding holistic health among medical students.

Materials and methods: The present study was conducted among 150 medical students of a medical college in MP state in India. The study was conducted through a questionnaire having questions about our daily life decisions and situations, diet and emotions. All three domains of holistic health were covered i.e. body, mind and spirit and then scored accordingly to grade the level of health.

Results: There were 49 males and 101 females in the study sample. The study showed that 15% of the students perceived optimal health, 23% excellent health, 32% good health, 12% fair health, 10% below average heath, and 8% poor health. None of them perceived extremely poor health. 50.0% admitted that they eat healthy diet, and 48.0% agreed that their water intake is adequate while 46.3% get at least seven to nine hours of sleep. In addition, 38.7% admitted that they suffer from increased body weight (obesity), and only 34.0% exercise frequently. Only 37.8% of students were able to meet their financial needs and desires, 56.0% admitted that their job does not utilize all of their greatest talents, and 26% agreed that they have peace of mind and tranquillity.

Conclusion: The majority of college medical students have good health but at the same time, it was found that a high percentage of the students are either unaware or are ignorant about the importance of regular physical activities and suffer from increased body weight. TStudents needs to be made aware about concept of holistic health and how to achieve it.

Keywords: Holistic Health, Physical Exercise, Body weight, Medical Students
Introduction

Holistic Health is an approach to life. Rather than focusing on illness or specific parts of the body, this ancient approach to health considers the whole person and how he or she interacts with his or her environment. Holistic Health is related to healthy diet and physical exercise, salutogenesis, health promotion, meditation, yoga, rehabilitation techniques, exercise and trauma care, biosciences in rehabilitation and prevention of diseases. It affirms the connection of mind, body, and spirit. Physical health is not necessarily the main focus in holistic health which differentiates it from alternative medicine, complementary medicine, and integrative medicine.1

Modern system of medicine has emerged as the best scientific method of treatment for most of the diseases which depends on costly technology for diagnosis and treatment which most countries including India can’t afford. It is also observed that there is lack of faith on modern system of medicine among certain populations. They also believe that modern system of medicine lack understanding of cultural and social values and belief system. Alternative system of medicine is well accepted by many in the country. In presence of various systems, people get confused and it results in delay in seeking healthcare which endanger their lives. Holistic medicine involves procedures that can enrich conventional medicine. A related term, complementary medicine, involves alternative medical treatment applied along with conventional treatment methods. Holistic medicine focuses on education and responsibility for personal efforts to achieve healthy life and well-being.

The principles of holistic health state that health is more than just not being sick, but it is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity. Holistic Health supports reaching higher levels of wellness as well as preventing illness, it considers the whole person and how he/she interacts with his/her environment. In current era, it is very important to carry out such studies to assess the complete well-being with the concept of holistic health among general population.2

Medical professionals are role model for general public for their life style and concept of health. Although healthy behaviour starts from school and home, but it is consolidated during college days. As syllabus progresses, concept of health and disease is taught to each medical student. However, there is little is known about student’s perception of holistic health. Therefore, the study was conducted to determine perception and practices of holistic health among medical students.

Method and Materials

Study design: A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted in a medical college in MP state in India.

The sample size was calculated using Epi-info software taking prevalence of positive perception of holistic health as 50% with 5% acceptable margin of error and 95% confidence interval. The calculated sample size came out to be 150. From the whole batch of second and third year students, a total of 150 were selected using convenience sampling method after taking their informed consent. To capture the response of holistic health, a standard validated questionnaire was used which was developed by American board of Holistic health. In the questionnaire, all three domains of holistic health were covered i.e. body, mind and spirit and then scored accordingly to grade the level of health. It was categorized based on the scores such as 325 – 375 as Optimal Health, 275 – 324 as Excellent Health, 225 – 274 as Good Health, 175 – 224 as Fair Health, 125 – 174 as Below Average Health, 75 – 124 as Poor Health and 0 – 74 Extremely Poor Health.

The data was entered in Microsoft Office Excel sheet. Descriptive analysis was done by calculating proportions.

Results

The study showed that (15%) of the students have optimal health, (23%) have excellent health, (32%) have good health, (12%) have fair health, (10%) have below average heath, (8%) have poor health, (0%) were found to have extremely poor health.

Only (50.0%), admitted that they eat healthy diet, and (48.0%) agreed that their water intake is adequate while (46.3%) get at least seven to nine hours of sleep. In addition, (38.7%) admitted that they suffer from increased body weight (obesity), and only (34.0%) exercise frequently.

The study showed that only (37.8%) of students are able to meet their financial needs and desires, (56.0%) admitted that their job does not utilize all of their greatest talents, (23%) have excellent health, (32%) have good health, (15%) of the students have optimal health status and 0 – 74 Extremely Poor Health.

Medical professionals are role model for general public for their life style and concept of health. Although healthy behaviour starts from school and home, but it is consolidated during college days. As syllabus progresses, concept of health and disease is taught to each medical student. However, there is little is known about student’s perception of holistic health. Therefore, the study was conducted to determine perception and practices of holistic health among medical students.

Table 1. Perceived health status among medical students

| Health Scale          | No. of Students | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------------|
| 150-190 Optimal Health| 22              | 15         |
| 110-150 Excellent Health| 35              | 23         |
| 80-110 Good Health    | 48              | 32         |
| 60-80 Fair Health     | 18              | 12         |
| 40-60 Below Average Health | 15         | 10         |
| 20-40 Poor Health     | 12              | 8          |
| 0-20 Extremely poor health | 0            | 0          |
| Total                 | 150             | 100        |
Discussion

Exercise builds confidence, reduces and relieves stress, improves learning and mental health, and can build healthy relationships around with common interests in wellbeing. The study illustrates that most college students do not care about drinking water, which may cause dehydration and affect their kidney function, and may cause other health problems. College student should focus on consuming a balanced diet, staying hydrated, and getting adequate amount of sleep, together with exercise and a healthy lifestyle will ensure physical, mental and spiritual health.

The concept of holistic health has not been explored fully in India yet. The perception of meaning of health remains different in various settings. Health is intrinsically holistic concept having subjective perception and social influences.

There are some studies done on health as holistic concept among medical professionals in abroad. A majority of participants in that study realized that a holistic view is not only factual knowledge but is also about feelings and social competence where both inner and outer circumstances can act as barriers or facilitators for the possibilities to have a holistic view in health. Therefore, it was essential to understand the perception of budding medical graduates about holistic concept of health since they are going to be future health providers in the country. It is essential that they understand the concept well before coming to actual implementation stage.

The present study showed that about 30% students had fair to poor status of self health. Only half of the students were eating healthy diet and 34% were doing exercise regularly. This is higher than the findings reported by another study done by Agha SA et al in Pakistan in which only 6% students reported eating right food and doing exercise. The reason for this difference may be different study settings, study tool and definitions used, subjective perception etc.

Only 26% were having peace with self as compared to 13% reported in previously mentioned study. This finding is important to realize that despite having knowledge about importance of health diet and exercise, not all medical students were practicing the same. This was consistent with the findings of a study done by Sajwani R et al in which very high proportion of medical students scored good scores in knowledge about healthy dietary habits but dietary practices were not consistent with the knowledge scores and only 18% of them were following healthy dietary habits.

Present study showed that 38.7% students admitted that they suffer from increased body weight or obesity. This was comparable with the findings reported by a study conducted by Anand T et al in which the actual proportions of actual obese, overweight and underweight students were 4.4%, 30.4% and 9.3%, respectively. The proportion of students perceiving themselves as obese or overweight was only 37.3%. Among actual overweight and obese students, only one-third were physically active.

Only 37.8% students were able to meet their financial needs and desires in present study. A review also stated that about 455 of college students had unmet need of finances which was a burden for them. Such financial and social factors can seriously affect well being of an individual.

Conclusion

The majority of college medical students had good perceived health. But at the same time, it was found that a high percentage of the students are either unaware or are ignorant about the importance of regular physical activities and suffer from increased body weight.

College students should be made aware about importance of consuming a balanced diet, staying hydrated, and getting adequate amount of sleep, together with exercise and a healthy lifestyle will ensure physical, mental and spiritual health.

Conflict of Interest: None

References

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