Awareness and Attitude of Medical Negligence and Medical Ethics among Interns and Resident Doctors

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**Abstract**

The objectives of the present study are to evaluate the awareness and attitude of interns and resident doctors, in Mangalore, about medical negligence and medical ethics. Participants where either intern or a resident doctor who was working in Mangalore. Participants were randomly chosen from both genders. Total number of interns were 269 (154 Males and 115 Females) and that of residents were 231 (134 males and 97 females). The study population lacks significant amount of knowledge about medical negligence and medical ethics. Majority of the interns have poor knowledge about the subject (61.3%). Only 4.8% of resident doctors have good knowledge and 48.1% of resident doctors have average knowledge. Study indicates that there should be a prompt action to cover the lack of awareness among doctors for their own safety and as well as that of the patients.

**Keywords**
Medical Negligence and Medical Ethics, Intern or a resident doctor.

**Introduction**

Medical negligence is defined as absence of reasonable care and skill, or willful negligence of a medical practitioner in the treatment of a patient, which cause bodily injury or death of the patient. Ethics has been defined as "the moral principles that govern a person's behavior or how an activity is conducted" and medical ethics as "the branch of knowledge concerned with moral principles" (Catherine Soanes, 2001).

Medical profession is the combination of the knowledge about diseases, along with the understanding and valuing the human feelings. So a medical practitioner is expected to have skills and knowledge in his field along with good ethical standards and legal awareness (Unnikrishnan et al., 2014).

Medical profession nowadays has changed its motive of service to commercialization, due to which functioning and services of hospitals and clinics have also undergone changes. The knowledge of medical negligence and medical ethics are essential for maintaining the patient doctor relationship and prevent the commercialization of the profession (Haripriya Haripriya, 2014). The public awareness regarding the negligence and ethical conduct by medical practitioners and the complaints against doctors and the
number of medical litigation by unsatisfied patients is rising day by day Ignorance of the law cannot be used as a ground for escaping punishment. Therefore doctors should familiar with the regulations and laws dealing with medical practice. Training period is the crucial time for developing the ethical views and awareness in young doctors (Raj et al., 2013).

The objectives of the present study are to evaluate the awareness and attitude of interns and resident doctors, in Mangalore, about medical negligence and medical ethics.

Methods and Material

Study was conducted on 500 interns and resident doctors in Mangalore. Random sampling technique was used. These selected group of participants were given a self structured questionnaire consisting of ten questions. Their response was collected. The responses to the provided questionnaire were studied in detail and analysed. The questions in the questionnaire were mainly in relation to procedural awareness, awareness of laws, awareness about the causes of negligence & ethical issues.

Results and Discussion

In this study was done on 500 participants. Participants where either intern or a resident doctor who was working in Mangalore. Participants were randomly chosen from both genders. Total number of interns were 269 (154 Males and 115 Females) and that of residents were 231 (134 males and 97 females). Study shows that, participants are more aware of the questions related to identifying cases of medical negligence and use of Red Cross emblem. They are least aware about the questions related to euthanasia, vicarious liability, and minimum age for giving consent. Resident doctors are more aware of situation involving medical negligence, vicarious liability and use of Red Cross emblem. Interns are more aware of consent and euthanasia.

Participants were allotted score according to their response. 1point was given for correct response, while no marks were allotted for wrong response. Score 8 and above was categorised into good knowledge. Scores from 5 to 7 were categorized into average knowledge and scores 4 and below was categorized into poor knowledge. Majority of interns - 61.3% have poor knowledge, 38.7% have average knowledge about medical negligence and medical ethics, while none of the intern participants had good knowledge. Meanwhile in resident doctors 4.8% have good knowledge, 48.1% have average knowledge, 47.1% have poor knowledge about medical negligence and medical ethics while.

Table 1

| GROUP | GENDER | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE | TOTAL |
|-------|--------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Interns | Males | 154 | 57.2% | 269 (53.7%) |
| | Females | 115 | 42.8% | |
| Residents | Males | 135 | 58.2% | 232 (46.3%) |
| | Females | 97 | 41.8% | |
Table.2

| QUESTIONS                                                                 | OPTIONS       | INTERN       | RESIDENT     | P VALUE |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------|
| 1. To identify a situation involving medical negligence.                  | Correct 231 (51.6%) | 217 (48.4%)  | 0.005       |
|                                                                           | Incorrect 38  | 15           |             |         |
| 2. Vicarious liability                                                    | Correct 40 (43.5%) | 52 (56.5%)   | 0.030       |
|                                                                           | Incorrect 229 | 180          |             |         |
| 3. Consent in a case of obstetrics.                                       | Correct 178 (54.4%) | 149 (45.6%) | 0.696       |
|                                                                           | Incorrect 91  | 82           |             |         |
| 4. Minimum age for consent.                                               | Correct 52 (57.8%) | 38 (42.2%)   | 0.391       |
|                                                                           | Incorrect 217 | 194          |             |         |
| 5. Ethical issue in artificial insemination.                              | Correct 86 (53.1%) | 76 (46.9%) | 0.851       |
|                                                                           | Incorrect 183 | 156          |             |         |
| 6. Knowledge about euthanasia.                                            | Correct 29 (64.4%) | 16 (35.6%)  | 0.129       |
|                                                                           | Incorrect 240 | 216          |             |         |
| 7. Ethical issue about delivery.                                          | Correct 67 (51.1%) | 64 (48.9%) | 0.496       |
|                                                                           | Incorrect 202 | 168          |             |         |
| 8. Negligence in a situation of emergency.                                | Correct 159 (52.5%) | 144 (47.5%) | 0.499       |
|                                                                           | Incorrect 110 | 88           |             |         |
| 9. Knowledge about Red Cross emblem.                                     | Correct 165 (49.7%) | 167 (50.3%) | 0.012       |
|                                                                           | Incorrect 183 | 156          |             |         |
| 10. Awareness about product liability.                                    | Correct 73 (52.9%) | 65 (47.1%) | 0.826       |
|                                                                           | Incorrect 196 | 167          |             |         |

Table.3

| Knowledge and awareness | Interns | Residents |
|-------------------------|---------|-----------|
| Good Knowledge          | 0%      | 4.8%      |
| Average knowledge       | 38.7%   | 48.1%     |
| Poor knowledge          | 61.3%   | 47.1%     |

Results of the study are consistent the study done by Haripriya A, Haripriya V and Rai JJ, Acharya R.V, Dave D. In their study S.D. Nanandkar, G.S. Chavan have suggested that periodical CME programmes, re orientation programmes and medical ethics and acts related to medical practice in postgraduate curriculum to solve the lack of awareness among doctors. The study population lacks the awareness about medico-legal issues, relevant laws, medical negligence and medical ethics. Many of the participants are not aware that most of their act can be medico legal issues. The curriculum for students should give more importance in regard to medico-legal aspects and for resident doctors, legal issues of hospital cases should be discussed & there should be learning methods about medicolegal and ethical issues. This awareness and legal issues and ethical matters is very much necessary among doctors for their own safety and as well as that of the patients.
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