

Knowledge, Attitude, and Perception of Medical Ethics among Medical Practitioners: A Cross-sectional Study

Dr. Prakash M. Mohite¹, Dr Sundeep Ingale², Dr. Pradeep G Dixit^{*3}, Dr. Avinash Harishchandra Waghmode⁴

¹Professor and Head, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Datta Meghe Medical College, DMIHER (DU), Nagpur

²Associate Professor, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Datta Meghe Medical College, DMIHER (DU), Nagpur

^{*3}Professor & Head, Dept of FMT, Symbiosis Medical College for Women and Symbiosis International University, Lavale, Pune.

⁴Associate Professor, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Indira Gandhi Government Medical College, Nagpur.

***Corresponding Author**

Dr. Pradeep G Dixit

Email ID: pgdixit2008@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Medical ethics is a system of moral principles that gives value to health professionals who practice medicine and guide them in scientific research. It comprises a set of four principles: respect for Autonomy, Nonmaleficence, Beneficence, and Justice, which form a basic foundation for all. It also helps in the professional conduct of behavior and guides them when facing ethical dilemmas. This study assessed the attitude of medical practitioners towards medical ethics.

Methods: A self-administered questionnaire was prepared regarding medical ethics, such as the role of consent, confidentiality, ethical conduct, and the importance of documentation. This questionnaire is distributed through Google Forms and analyzed using the percentage proportion scale.

Results: In our study, 99 % of the participants agreed that the patients' opinions on the treatment must be respected. About 87 % of the study participants disagreed that confidentiality is not a necessary aspect of treatment. 79 % of the practitioners agreed that doctors should do their best for patients irrespective of patient's opinions.

Conclusion: The results of this study revealed medical practitioners' understanding of practical facets of medical ethics throughout their standard practice at the workplace needs to be improved. The disparity in ethical perspectives among various levels of healthcare professionals may be overcome by implementing practical ethics education.

Keywords: *Medical Ethics, Professional behaviour, Medical practice.*

How to Cite: Dr. Prakash M. Mohite, Dr Sundeep Ingale, Dr. Pradeep G Dixit, Dr. Avinash Harishchandra Waghmode, (2025) Knowledge, Attitude, and Perception of Medical Ethics among Medical Practitioners: A Cross-sectional Study, *Journal of Carcinogenesis*, Vol.24, No.7s, 335-339

1. INTRODUCTION

Medical ethics is a system of moral principles that gives value to health professionals who practice medicine and guide them in scientific research. It comprises a set of four principles: respect for Autonomy, Nonmaleficence, Beneficence, and Justice, which form an essential foundation for all. It also helps in the professional conduct of behavior and guides them when they have to face ethical Dilemmas¹. Patients' needs cannot be fulfilled with just clinical knowledge because of increasing public awareness of bioethics, and physicians are expected to give comprehensive and compassionate services to the community.

It is evident from the literature that traditional medical training offers little in resolving the ethical dilemmas that are encountered as a matter of routine by healthcare professionals. However, healthcare professionals are expected to have sound knowledge about ethical practice³. There is evidence through studies that a significant proportion of healthcare

professionals were unaware of the universally recognized bioethical principles such as the Hippocratic Oath, the Nuremberg Code, and the Declaration of Helsinki, which are essential parts of clinical practice⁴.

There is a crucial need to prepare future ethically competent doctors to avoid any medicolegal issues and be sufficiently aware to face any medical litigations. To devise adequate training programs in medical ethics, there is a pressing need to estimate the current knowledge, understand attitudes, and elucidate the practices of future doctors⁵. Sufficient knowledge, a favorable attitude, and comprehensive training in medical ethics help prepare medical professionals to anticipate, cope with, discuss, and resolve ethical dilemmas and challenges encountered in day-to-day practice. Teaching and training in medical ethics is necessary to achieve the competencies required to deliver services in an ethical manner.

The ethics component of the undergraduate medical curricula has, therefore, been revised and improved over the past few decades with changes based on the needs of the

Community⁷

Rationale for the study

- a) Patients expect physicians to be professional. That's why, by carrying out this study, we can change the behavior and attitude of physicians toward patients.
- b) Professionalism is associated with increased outcomes.
- c) Medical societies and accrediting organizations can expect physicians to be professionals.

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim:

Assessment of Ethics and Professionalism in Medical Practitioners.

Objectives:

1. To assess the knowledge of medical ethics among medical practitioners
2. To evaluate the understanding of professionalism among medical practitioners
3. To identify the professional and unprofessional behavior of the practicing physician
4. To identify the principles of ethics in practicing physician

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This Cross-sectional study (Descriptive Study) was carried out among intern doctors, medical teachers, and medical practitioners in and around Maharashtra from 2021 to 2022. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the institutional Ethical Committee. The purpose of the research and the nature of the information that has to be furnished by participants of this study were explained to them. Verbal consent regarding the willingness to participate in the study was obtained. A detailed proforma containing 17 questions regarding everyday ethical issues like ethical conduct, autonomy, confidentiality, and informed consent was prepared and administered to the participants through Google Forms.

The questionnaire was pilot-tested on 20 participants and modified accordingly. The respondents were required to answer if they agreed or disagreed with statements made on these issues. The collected data was coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (S.P.S.S. software). The data was interpreted using appropriate statistical methods, such as percentages and proportions.

4. OBSERVATION & RESULTS

Table 1: Distribution of study participants according to knowledge, attitude, and perception regarding medical Ethics.

Sr.No.	Issues in Medical Ethics	Agree / True / Yes	Disagree / False / No
1	The patient's opinion on the treatment must be respected.	99 %	1%
2	Confidentiality is not an essential aspect of treatment.	13%	87%
3	Doctors should do their best for patients irrespective of patient's opinion	79%	21%

4	Children should not be treated without the consent of their parents.	78%	22%
5	If laws allow abortion, then doctors cannot refuse to do so	64%	36%
6	If there is a disagreement between patients/families and healthcare professionals about treatment decisions, the doctor's decision should be final.	46%	54%
7	Ethical conduct is essential only to avoid legal action.	24%	76%
8	Ethics should be taught as a part of the syllabus in all institutions running medical and paramedical courses	98%	2%
9	Disclosure about illness, its severity, and the patient's general health should invariably be made to the relatives.	70%	30%
10	In your opinion, are the doctors receiving income from referring patients to specialists or for medical tests?	69%	31%
11	Consent is required only for surgeries, not for tests and medicines	20%	80%
12	Documentation is of paramount importance in avoiding litigations.	98%	2%
13	Do you think doctors are influenced by drug or Pharma Company's inducements, including gifts?	65%	35%
14	To prevent the transmission of infectious diseases Disclosure of positive status to neighbors should be done.	59%	41%
15	Consent of the wife is not required in the vasectomy of the husband.	40%	60%
16	Consent of spouse is not necessary in MTP	76%	24%
17	Is enough trust given to medical ethics in the undergraduate curriculum?	49%	51%

In our study, 99 % of the participants agreed that the patients' opinions on the treatment must be respected. About 87 % of the study participants disagreed that confidentiality is not an necessary aspect of treatment. 79 % of the practitioners agreed that doctors should do their best for patients irrespective of patient's opinions.

About 78 % of the participants think that children should not be treated without the consent of their parents. 64% of the participants are in agreement with the statement that if laws allow abortion, then doctors cannot refuse to do so. About 54% of the study participants think that if there is disagreement between patients or families and healthcare professionals about treatment decisions, the doctor's decision should be final.

Ethical conduct is essential only to avoid legal action, which is a false statement according to 76% of the study participants. 98% of the practitioners agreed that ethics should be taught as a part of the syllabus in all institutionsinstitutions running medical and paramedical courses.

Most of the participants agreed upon Disclosurethe ofDisclosure illness (70 %), the Importance of documentation (98%), and role of the consent in MTP (76 %), and privileged communication, i.e., DisclosureDisclosure of the positive status of the patient to the neighbor to prevent the transmission of disease (59%). However, participants were not aware of

5. BRIEF DISCUSSION

In our study, most of the practitioners give contradictory views regarding medical ethics. While dealing with the treatment, most of the practitioners (99%) agreed to adhere to the patient's wishes; on the contrary, 79 % of practitioners think that doctors should do their best irrespective of the patient's opinion. Our findings are consistent with the study done by Chatterjee et al.⁸ in West Bengal. In another study conducted in Chennai, 87% of physicians concluded that they consider patients' opinions before taking any significant treatment; however, 81% of them reported that they do best for patients irrespective of their opinion.⁹

In our study, 80 % of the participants disagreed with the statement that consent is required only for surgeries and not for laboratory tests and medicines. A study carried out by Janakiram C et al. among medical postgraduates in South India reported that 83% of the participants disagreed as consent is required for only surgical procedures.¹⁰ In another study conducted in Chennai among healthcare providers at government hospitals, it was reported that that only 12% of physicians obtained consent before doing any investigation.¹¹

Most of the participants (76 %) of the study disagree that ethical conduct is essential only to avoid legal action, which is in agreement with the study done by Subramanian T et al.⁹ In a study conducted among medical postgraduates in Cochin reported 85% of them disagreed that ethical conduct is essential only to avoid legal actions.¹⁰

About 36 % of participants disagree with the statements that if laws allow abortion, doctors must not refuse to do abortion, which is similar to the study done by Subramanian et al.⁹. This shows that many practitioners are still unaware of patients' rights. In another study done by Borgen SA et al.¹² in Manipur, 60 % of doctors disagreed with the statement doctors must not refuse to have an abortion when the law allows it. Similarly, another multicentric study conducted among doctors and nurses from North India reported that 63% of them reported doctors can refuse to do abortions.¹³

6. CONCLUSION

The results of this study revealed medical practitioners' understanding of practical facets of medical ethics throughout their standard practice at the workplace needs to be improved.

The disparity in ethical perspectives among various levels of healthcare professionals may be overcome by implementing practical ethics education.

Workplace education initiatives like sensitization workshops, C.M.E.s, and conferences on healthcare ethics could assist in bridging the gap to several extents.

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank all the interns, postgraduate students, Medical Teachers, and Medical practitioners for actively participating in the study. This study was done as a research Project for the Advanced Course in Medical Education by Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Sawangi Meghe, Wardha, Maharashtra. So, I am very thankful to the Nodal Centre for allowing me to participate in this course and for carrying out this research Project.

I want to express my special gratitude to my mentor, **Dr. Prakash M. Mohite**, for his able guidance and support in completing this research Project.

I also like to extend my gratitude to **Dr. Anil J. Anjankar**, the Head of Department J.N.M.C., Sawangi Meghe, Wardha, for providing me with the proper platform for completing this Project.

REFERENCES

- [1] Rani V. Knowledge and attitude about medical ethics among undergraduate medical students - A crosssectional comparative study. *Indian J Health Sci Biomed Res* 2022; 15:131-6.
- [2] Karthikeyan K, Kanagaraj D, Karthikeyan V, Devandiran S. Knowledge, attitude, and practice of healthcare ethics among doctors in Tamil Nadu – A cross-sectional study. *Int J Med Sci Public Health* 2020; 9(5):305-309.
- [3] Hariharan, S., Jonnalagadda, R., Walrond, E. and Moseley, H. (2006). Knowledge, attitudes, and practice of healthcare ethics and law among doctors and nurses in Barbados. *B.M.C. Medical Ethics*, 7(1), 1.
- [4] Adhikari S, Paudel K, Aro AR, Adhikari TB, Adhikari B, Mishra SR. Knowledge, attitude, and practice of healthcare ethics among resident doctors and ward nurses from a resource-poor setting in Nepal. *B.M.C. Med Ethics* 2016; 17(1):68.
- [5] Al Shehri E, Siddiqui AF, Khalil SN. Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice of Medical Ethics among Resident Physicians of Specialty Certificate in Aseer Province, Saudi Arabia. *J Liaquat Uni Med Health Sci*. 2020; 19(01):4854. doi: 10.22442/jlumhs.201910661
- [6] Schwartz L, Preece PE, Hendry RA. *Medical Ethics: A case-based approach*. London: Saunders Elsevier

Limited; 2002. 11.

- [7] Karunathilake I, Samarasekera D, Dias R, Olupeliyawa A. Medical Education reforms in Sri Lanka. *Asia Pac Biotech News*. 2006; 10(15):809–8011 Available from https://www.asiabiotech.com/10/1015/0809_0811.pdf. Accessed 17 Jul 2019.
 - [8] Chatterjee B, Sarkar J. Awareness of medical Ethics among West Bengal Medical College undergraduates. *Indian J Med Ethics*,2012;9(2):93-9
 - [9] Subramanian T, Mathai AK, Kumar N. Knowledge and practice of clinical ethics among health care providers in a government hospital in Chennai. *Indian J Med Ethics*. 2013; 2:96-100.
 - [10] Janakiram C, Gardens SJ. Knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to health care ethics among South Indian medical and dental postgraduate students. *Indian J Med Ethics*,2014;2:100-3
 - [11] Rabbani MW, Mujtaba M, Naeem F, Ullah E. Knowledge and awareness of medical ethics among medical graduates from two medical colleges in Lahore, Pakistan. *Rawala Med J*. 2014;39(3):341-3.
 - [12] Borgen SA, Rajkumari B, Laishram J, Joy A. Knowledge and attitude of doctors on medical ethics in Teaching Hospital Manipur. *Indian J Med Ethics*. 2009; 6:194-7.
 - [13] Chopra M, Bharadwaj A, Mitha P, Sign A, Siddiqui A, Rajesh PR. Current status of knowledge, attitude, and practices towards healthcare ethics among doctors and nurses from north India- A Multicentre study. *J.K.I.M.S.U*. 2013; 2:102-7
-