ISSN: 2581 – 3633

International Journal of Medical Science and Advanced Clinical Research (IJMACR)

Available Online at: https://www.ijmacr.com

Volume – 9, Issue – 6, November – 2026, Page No.: 284 – 289

Knowledge, Perception and Feedback of Medical Students on Implementation of Electives in a Tertiary Care Hospital

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How to citation this article: Nowsheeba Khurshid, Uzma Rasool, Ghulam M. Bhat, Arish Nazir Shora, "Knowledge, Perception and Feedback of Medical Students on Implementation of Electives in a Tertiary Care Hospital", IJMACR– November – 2026, Volume – 9, Issue – 6, P. No. 284 – 289.

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Type of Publication: Original Research Article

Conflicts of Interest: Nil

Abstract

Introduction: Elective posting is a part of new curriculum, introduced by National Medical Commission (NMC) for phase III MBBS students. The goal of electives is to enhance problem solving skills, clinical competence and also allows students to explore their deeper interest areas to help them identify their future career path.

Aim: The aim of this study was to access the perception and knowledge of medical students about Elective posting and to take feedback from the students to improve and refine the process for future batches.

Material &Method: The study was conducted in the Department of Anatomy, Government Medical College Srinagar. 74 phase III MBBS students consented to participate in the study. A well designed, pre validated questionnaire was filled out by the students who attended elective posting. The responses were collected through google forms.

Results: 83.8% of the students were aware about existence of electives. About 70.3%, 74.3% respectively were aware about purpose and importance of electives, only 44.6% were aware about formative assessment related to electives,54% were confused about selecting

the topic. 55% perceived necessity to undergo both clinical and non-clinical electives. Many students perceived duration of electives less. The feedback was very positive regarding anatomy elective posting and most students being satisfied. While students were suggesting more assistance was needed.

Conclusion: The present study highlighted the potential of elective posting in intensifying student Knowledge and clinical readiness. Most of the students were aware of existence and purpose of elective posting. Students perceived them useful and feedbacks obtained will help the department in improving the posting structure for future students who elect to take postings in our department.

Keywords: Electives, nonclinical, medical students, perception.

Introduction

Elective posting is a part of new curriculum, introduced by National Medical Commission (NMC) for phase III MBBS students. Aiming to enhance problem solving skills, clinical competence and also allows students to explore their deeper interest areas to help them identify their future career path. The term electives imply "a period during undergraduate training within which there is significant element of student's choice. The NMC formally introduced electives in the CBME curriculum before the completion of undergraduate training, to facilitate learning beyond primary care, which might allow students to begin the process of professional networking early. It is important that departments collect students feedback about their satisfaction regarding electives.[1,2]

Electives have been presumed as transformative learning, which means a two-phase process encompassing instrumental and communicative learning. Where instrumental learning means "learning through task-oriented problem solving and determination of cause-and-effect relationships. Communicative learning refers to understanding how others communicate their feelings needs and desires with other person.[3] The short duration experimental courses enable students to pursue personal interests, engage in self directed learning and cultivate lateral thinking, which subsequently help in shaping future physicians into researchers and specialists.[4,5]

NMC guidelines regarding an electives is a zone or a course that, as a specialty will allow the students to learn and explore something unique. Students will have to opt one of the electives offered by pre- and para- clinical departments. The present study aimed to access the perception and knowledge of medical students about Elective posting. To take the feedback from the students to improve and refine the process for coming students**.** [6] So, this study was planned to explore student's knowledge, perception and feedback on elective postings in Anatomy.

Materials and Methods

This prospective observational, questionnaire-based study was conducted at the Department of Anatomy, Government Medical College, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir. The electives were properly planned according to NMC guidelines. All Phase III students posted during the study period were invited to participate through convenience sampling technique. A pre-validated, structured questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms. Of the students approached, 74 submitted complete responses and data were analysed using SPSS version 22. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize awareness, perceptions, and feedback. The

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form also consisted to open ended questions for conceptualization, suggestion and further improvement.

Results

A total of 74 students responded and filled the questionnaire, making the response rate to 100%. The majority of the students were female (58.1%). 83.8% of the students were aware about existence of electives. About 70.3%, 74.3% respectively were aware about purpose and importance of electives, only 44.6% were aware about formative assessment related to electives,54% were confused about selecting the topic. 55% perceived necessity to undergo both clinical and non-clinical electives. (Table 1)

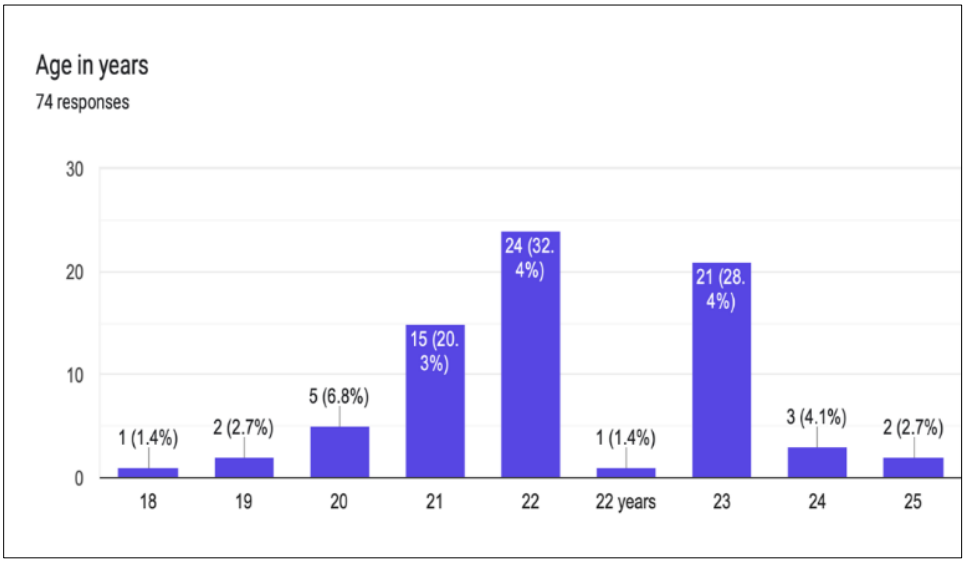

Figure 1: showing the response rate of the participants

Table 1: Awareness regarding Elective posting

S. No	Question	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Aware about the existence of elective posting	62	12
2	Aware about the purpose of elective posting	52	22
3	Aware about importance of elective posting	55	19
4	Aware about the existence of elective posting	33	41
5	Aware about the percentage of attendance required in electives	49	25
6	Aware about choosing of non-clinical topics	51	23

5-point Likert scale was used to check the perception of students. Majority of the students agreed that non-clinical postings were useful and it was necessary to undergo both clinical and non-clinical posting. Many students perceived duration of electives less. (Table 2)

The feedback was very positive regarding anatomy elective posting and most students being satisfied. While many students suggested more assistance was needed.

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Table 2: Perception regarding elective posting.

S. No	Questions	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
1	Was non-clinical posting useful?	17	23	12	12	10
2	Was timing for electives appropriate?	18	17	16	9	14
3	Was it necessary to undergo both clinical and non-clinical posting?	26	15	12	7	14
4	Was the duration for elective sufficient?	20	11	16	12	15
5	Did the elective posting serve their purpose	16	17	23	10	8

Table 3: Showing Challenges Faced by students during elective posting

S. No	Questions	Response	
		Yes%	No%
1	Was selecting of topic confusing	45.9	54.1
2	Difficulty to finish clinical posting, while attending non -clinical electives	20.3	79.7
3	Did you choose certain topic by default	40.5	59.5
4	Did many students chose same topic because of less options	37.8	62.2
5	No option to change topic after selecting	58.1	41.9

When asked about the challenges faced 54% said they were not confused about selection of topic.79.7% were in the view that it was not difficult to finish clinical posting, while attending non-clinical electives. 58.1% agreed that there was no option to change topic after selecting (Table 3).

Discussion

It is thought that the electives will provide opportunity to students to match their aspirations with the ground reality in the field of their potential future career. Electives are a series of short courses offered during the undergraduate year that student can choose from based on their interest or career goals. This self- directed learning activity may allow the learner to explore an area of interest to augment future study. When enquired about the student's perception about the electives students mostly agreed that having non clinical postings was useful and necessary, which is similar to findings by Koceic et al [7] and Priyanka et al.[1]

It was found that the students were aware about the electives, there purpose and importance. Most of students felt that the timing of these postings appropriate and well planned, Students also agreed duration of these posting was sufficient and programme served its purpose, which is similar to study by Vidja et al,[8] Neel et al [9] and Priyanka et al.[1] When asked about the challenges faced by the students throughout the elective posting, it was found that majority of the students felt the process of selecting the topics was not confusing but there was no option to change their choice topic once selected. which is similar to the results of Koceic et al[7] and Priyanka et al.[1]

Most of students opined that it was not difficult for them to attend non-clinical electives after their normal clinical posting. Most of the students chose their elective posting

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either by default or because there were not many options available, this suggests that the process of selecting elective topics and implementation of elective posting was good but needs to be further improved so that all the students get the electives of their choice. The responses we got have two advantages mentioned by Kusukar and Croiset:[10] a) The electives provide the opportunity to experience which is not a part of routine curriculum and introduce "autonomy support" in the curriculum. B) electives help to cater to high caliber students who find the medical syllabus too restrictive and boring. Electives provide them with more challenges, which is important for stimulating their autonomous motivation.[11]

Limitation

Non-inclusion of the opinion of the faculty involved in the implementation of program. Their views, perception and challenges faced while implementing the elective postings. These would have given us more data for better conduct of this program for future batches.

Conclusion

Elective postings can be an important part of medical education under the new CBME curriculum, as the choice of topics is up to the students which can make them feel more involved and help them explore their areas of interest. The present study highlighted the potential of elective posting in intensifying student Knowledge and clinical readiness.

Most of the students were aware of existence and purpose of elective posting. Students perceived them useful and feedbacks obtained will help the department in improving the posting structure for future students who elect to take postings in our department.

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