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Medical students and interns' knowledge about and attitude towards homosexuality

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Background & Rationale: Medical professionals' attitude towards homosexuals affects health care offered to such patients with a different sexual orientation. There is absence of literature that explores the attitudes of Indian medical students or physicians towards homosexuality.

Aim: This study aimed to evaluate Indian medical students and interns' knowledge about homosexuality and attitude towards homosexuals.

Materials & Methods: After IEC approval and written informed consent, a cross-sectional study was conducted on a purposive sample of undergraduate medical students and interns studying in one Indian medical college. The response rate was 80.5%. Only completely and validly filled responses (N=244) were analyzed. The participants filled the Sex Education and Knowledge about Homosexuality Questionnaire (SEKHQ) and the Attitudes towards Homosexuals Questionnaire (AHQ). SEKHQ consisted of 32 statements with response chosen from 'true', 'false' or 'don't know'. AHQ consisted of 20 statements scorable on a 5 points Likert scale. Multiple linear regressions were used to find the predictors of knowledge and attitude.

Results: Medical students and interns had inadequate knowledge about homosexuality, although they endorsed a neutral stance insofar as their attitude towards homosexuals is concerned. Females had more positive attitudes towards homosexuals. Knowledge emerged as the most significant predictor of attitude; those having higher knowledge had more positive attitudes.

Conclusion: Enhancing knowledge of medical students by incorporation of homosexuality related health issues in the curriculum could help reduce prejudice towards the sexual minority and thus impact their future clinical practice.

Biography

Aditya Soni has completed his Post graduation in MD Psychiatry from Gujarat University, India. He is currently working at Rajasthan as a Senior Resident in a premier Neuroscience and De-addiction Centre.

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