

ORIENTATION PROGRAMME FOR FIRST YEAR MEDICAL STUDENTS. A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To estimate the perceptions of the students regarding its usefulness in academic and future prospects and to get a clear picture of having promoted learning and ascertaining the standards

Study Design: A mixed methods research design was adopted.

Place and Duration of Study: Wah Medical College Wah Cantt, from Nov 2016 to Oct 2017.

Material and Methods: Sixty-five students of the first year MBBS were given questionnaire, quantitative data on the feedback of orientation week was analyzed through the SPSS version 21. Likert based statistics were analyzed as mean \pm SD. The significance of gender related responses was found out by using Chi square test at a p -value of 0.05. The qualitative data was analyzed to identify emerging themes.

Results: Out of 65 students 26 (40%) were males and 39 (60%) were females. About half of the students (44.6%) strongly agreed that the objective were clearly communicated. About 46.2% of the students felt that the environment was safe and conducive for learning. Qualitative analysis generated nine themes in which the most important were the future impact of the orientation week, interactive teaching, the concepts of medical ethics and professionalism.

Conclusion: The students found that the topics discussed during the orientation week were of great relevance and time allocated was adequate. However, it unfolded a couple of topics that needed more elaboration which could be incorporated in the upcoming years.

Keywords: Interactive teaching, Learning opportunities, Medical ethics, Professionalism, Students.

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INTRODUCTION

The first year MBBS students, as they enter the medical colleges, are exposed to an entirely different environment of teaching and learning. Transition of education from higher secondary school to first year of professional college may turn out to be extremely hard for students because of the increase in the size and level of the syllabus. Novel terminology, enormous curriculum of all the three subjects of basic sciences and a busy academic calendar are enough to rattle students. At this point of time, it is pertinent to address certain important factors relating to values and mannerism in students and the primary concern is to create an understanding of professionalism, ethical behaviors, importance of clinical subjects and confidentiality in dealing with cadavers and patients^{1,2}. Medical studies are

time-consuming and very nerve-racking. An exhaustive curriculum with minimum time for leisure, high expectations, scare of ragging, loneliness, and a host of other factors make the first year difficult for most students³. In order to orientate and assist students for smooth transition, various programs have been conducted before formal commencement of academic courses in medical schools around the world for the past many decades. Enough evidence is available to support that such activities serve as a foundation for college success. If properly carried out, orientation programs generate a longlasting impression for new students and their families⁴. This tendency is widespread all around Asia with many colleges offering an orientation program spread over 3 days to a week. The students are introduced to various teaching styles, learning behaviours, medical and social aspects of curriculum and faculty members. In addition to it study skills, history of medicine, ethics and

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values, time management, communication skills and community health are also taught to help them alleviate their anxiety⁴⁻⁶.

Keeping all this in mind, Wah Medical College Wah cantt, Pakistan conducted an orientation week in collaboration with the National University of Medical Sciences Rawalpindi Pakistan (table-I). The study was carried out to gauge the perceptions of the students regarding its usefulness in academic and future prospects. Another aim of the study was to get a clear picture of having promoted learning and ascertaining the standards which were met during the week⁷⁻⁹.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This mixed Methods research was conducted at Wah Medical College Wah Cantt from Nov 2016 to Oct 2017. This approach was preferred over the others to get firstly, a general overview of the topics covered in the orientation week quantitatively and secondly, extensive insight into the gained knowledge and perceptions of students regarding the usefulness of the covered domains, qualitatively. Enough evidence in the literature supports the use of mixed methods design^{10,11}. Eleven Likert based questions were included in the questionnaire to measure the responses on teaching and learning methodologies, learning environment, use of information technology and medium of instruction during the week. The cronbach's alpha reliability of the questionnaire was α : 0.932. The last four open ended questions were designed to study perceptions of students pertaining to usefulness of teaching and learning methods covered in the week. This was done to deeply analyse covered domains. The emphasis was laid on gender related responses to get the difference between the learning behaviors and choices of both the girls and boys. We collected the feedback data from 65 students of the first year MBBS from Wah Medical College, Wah Cantt, Pakistan as only those students were enrolled in the college till the first week (purposive sampling).

By using mixed methods, quantitative data on the feedback of orientation week was analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.1. Likert based statistics were analyzed as mean \pm SD^{13,14}. The significance of gender related responses was found out by using Chi square test at a *p*-value of 0.05. The qualitative data was analyzed to identify emerging themes. This method was used to improve the validity of qualitative data^{13,15,16}. Table-II describes the activity pattern during the week.

RESULTS

Quantitative Analysis

All (n=65) students completed the questionnaire, making the response rate of 100%. Out of 65 students 26 (40%) were males and 39 (60%) were females (fig-1).

About half of the students (44.6%) strongly agreed that the objective were clearly communicated. About 46.2% of the students felt that the environment was safe and conducive for learning (fig-2).

Twenty-four (61.5%) girls and 15 (57.7%) boys agreed that they were introduced to critical thinking however the difference between their responses was found insignificant (0.759). The emphasis was laid on gender related responses to get the difference between the learning behaviors and choices of both the girls and boys. The mean \pm SD score of each statement in the questionnaire for all 65 students were calculated (table-III).

Qualitative Analysis

Student responses to openended questions were analyzed thematically as described by¹⁷ three independent reviewers compared results to increase the validity of the research. Nine themes have been identified from eighty seven codes (Annexure 1).

Future Impact

"The impact of this week's teaching on my upcoming academic years and later will be very good. I have learnt also how to overcome any challenge that I will face in the next 5 years."

“This week’s lectures will have a sort of stimulation and encouragement”

Medical ethics and Professionalism

“I got to know that becoming a doctor, there are certain values and norms that have to be kept. So, being a doctor means being a healer and

mind while dealing with a patient like patient’s confidentiality, ethics and consent etc.”

“I think due to this our communication skills are improved.”

Teaching holistically

“This week learning will be with me for the

Table-I: Activity pattern of foundation module/orientation week.

Day	Topics Discuss
Monday	Introduction about foundation module ‘Healer And Explorer’.
Tuesday	‘Healer And Explorer’ reasons and objectives.
	Professionalism and Communications skills.
Wednesday	Learning styles discussion
	Significance of small group
	Principles of andragogy and Power point presentations
Thursday	Ethics and Consent
	Patient confidentiality.
	Truth telling, medical errors, adverse events reporting.
Friday	Reflect cultural diversity of Pakistan.
	Promote students based learning.
	Concept of Empathy and Sympathy via videos
	Discussing Khudi and Islam, Feedback session

Table-II: Mean score ranking.

Mean scores for behavior statement	Ranking
5	Excellent
4.5	Good
4	Above-average
3.5	Average
3	Below Average

Table-III: Mean score regarding teaching methodology.

Statements	n	Mean score (SD)
Lecture objectives were communicated clearly either at the beginning or at the end of each class	65	4.35 (0.783)
Lecture objectives were achieved	65	4.25 (0.685)
There was gain in your knowledge or skill from the lectures	65	4.51 (0.732)
Interaction with the students was encouraged during the lecture	65	4.34 (0.796)
Appropriate technology was used to deliver the lecture	65	4.17 (0.894)
The teacher had a respectable behavior with the students	65	4.58 (0.727)
There was clarity of speech	65	4.26 (0.815)
Environment was safe and conducive for learning	65	4.34 (0.796)
Students were introduced to critical Thinking	65	4.09 (0.879)
Teacher developed an interest in the subject matter	65	4.29 (0.824)
Delivery of lecture in English language was comfortable for you	65	4.00 (0.984)

medical profession is meant to empathize.”

“I learnt how to behave, communicate with the patient. Which things I have to keep in

rest of my life and will always help me to lead a balanced professional life”.

“This week reduced our fear regarding medical studies”

Research Orientation

“The most interesting and useful was learning about different search engines available to us through the internet”

Transformed Concepts

“We are transformed into better human beings”

“The concept of “Khudi” delivered by a professor was very interesting for me. After listening that speech I knew the purpose of creation of human being in a better way.”

“Empathy and sympathy were interesting and useful.”

Interactive Teaching

“Problem based learning and care based training orientation was best in this week.”

“Behavioral sciences and psychiatry parts

“These sessions were really helpful for me the environment was very friendly there were

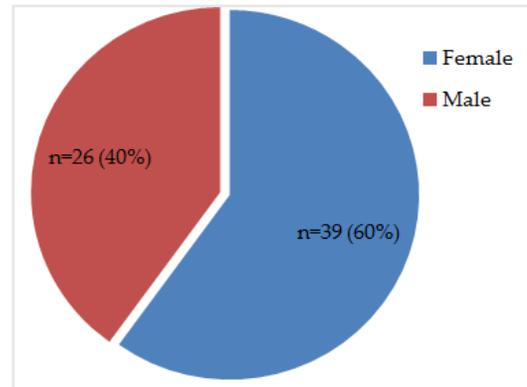


Figure-1: Gender distribution.

much interaction between teacher and students due to which my confidence increased and I gained much knowledge”

Information deficit

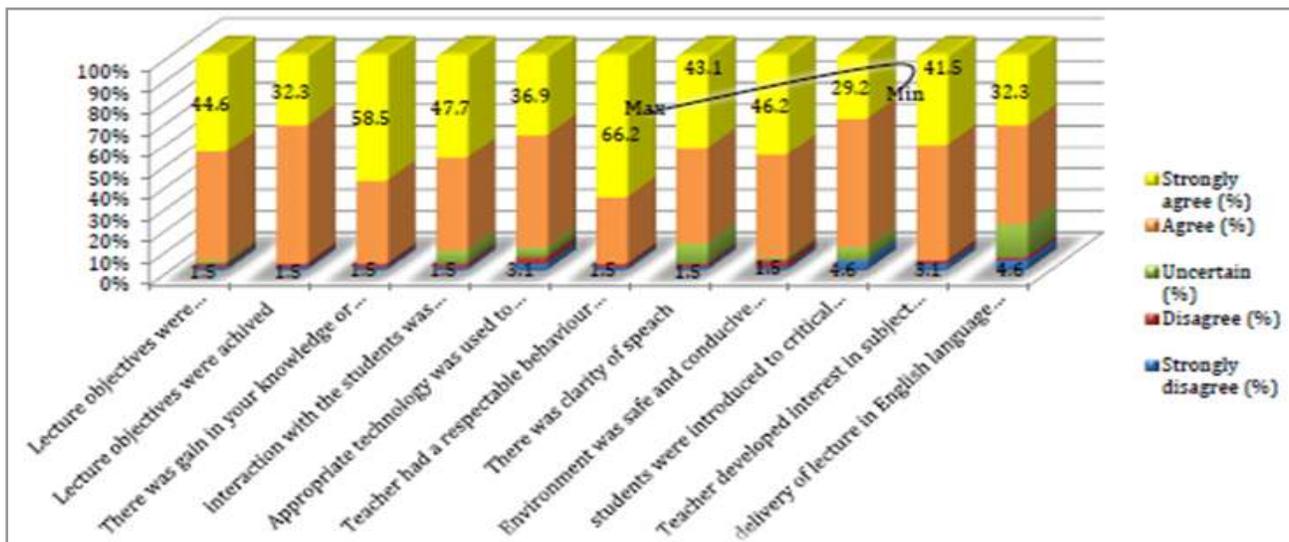


Figure-2: Student’s perceptions regarding teaching methodologies/ strategies.

were most interesting and useful.”

Donning white coats

“I think the last day was quite interesting regarding the white coat ceremony”

Learning Opportunity

“One of the finest weeks of my life, no doubt WMC has fine faculty, hopefully we will be able to achieve the best education here.”

“No, but one is that a professional should give proper time to his family members. How he enjoys his personal life.”

“Less importance was given to introduction about the laboratory, which we were supposed to handle through out”

“Topic and teaching on how students should create a study schedule and guidance on how to manage a heavy course load to come upon us.”

DISCUSSION

Orientation programmes run all around the world to make students gain knowledge about the course they are entering into. Our study was based on an orientation program that was spread over a week and covered a number of topics ranging from styles of learning to ethics & professionalism. This is in accordance with the

out in Xavier University School of Medicine having 57.9% females & 42.1% males¹⁸.

About 46.2% of the students felt that the environment was safe and conducive for learning during the orientation week though research conducted in Sargodha Pakistan found out that 71.1% of the students were satisfied with the comfort level of the class rooms⁴.

Annexure-1

Themes		Descriptive Code's
1	Future Impact	Successful doctor ¹ , Upcoming academic years ² , Successfully inculcated ³ , Overcome any challenge ⁴ , Improves previous knowledge ⁵ , Basis of future education ⁶ , Learnt new things ⁷ , Confident ⁸ , Beneficial in future ⁹ , Better doctor ¹⁰ , Stimulation and encouragement ¹¹ , Use in my later life ¹² .
2	Medical ethics and Professionalism	Sincere ¹³ , Cooperative ¹⁴ , Honest with patients ¹⁵ , Respectable manner ¹⁶ , Good communicator ¹⁷ , Learned ethical behavior ¹⁸ , Doctor means a healer ¹⁹ , Communication skills improved ²⁰ , Doctor- patient relationship ²¹ , Understand patients ²² Problems ²³ , Seeking patients ²⁴ trust ²⁵ , Awareness ²⁶ , Obligations ²⁷ , Duties ²⁸ , Confidentiality ²⁹ , Patient consent ³⁰ , Personality building ³¹ , Respect ³² , Loyalty ³³ , Moral values ³⁴ , Norms ³⁵ , Overcome mishaps ³⁶ , Counter gender sensitization ³⁷ , Fidelity ³⁸ , Morality ³⁹ , Care ⁴⁰ .
3	Teaching holistically	Rules for learning ⁴¹ , Life long learning ⁴² , Enhanced skills and knowledge ⁴³ , Inspired by lectures ⁴⁴ , Different professions within the medical field ⁴⁵ , Balanced professional life ⁴⁶ , Fear regarding medical studies ⁴⁷ , Group study ⁴⁸ .
4	Research orientation	Research work ⁴⁹ , Learning different search engines ⁵⁰ , Research methods ⁵¹ , Procedures ⁵² , Infection spreads ⁵³ , Control of infection ⁵⁴ , Useful part ⁵⁵ .
5	Transformed Concepts	Self and patient protection ⁵⁶ , Transformed into better human beings ⁵⁷ , Concept of khuddi ⁵⁸ , purpose ⁵⁹ , Creation of human beings ⁶⁰ , Empathy ⁶¹ , Sympathy ⁶² , Iqbal ⁶³ , RUMI's teaching ⁶⁴ .
6	Interactive teaching	CBL ⁶⁵ , PBL ⁶⁶ , Care based training ⁶⁷ , Wards ⁶⁸ , Behavioral sciences ⁶⁹ , Phychiatry ⁷⁰ .
7	Donning white coats	Duties after wearing coats ⁷¹ , Interesting ⁷² , Responsibility linked ⁷³ .
8	Learning Opportunity	Fine faculty ⁷⁴ , Best education ⁷⁵ , Honesty of profession ⁷⁶ , Interaction between teachers and students ⁷⁷ .
9	Information deficit	Less importance to laboratory ⁷⁸ , Guide for respective subjects ⁷⁹ , Confused about books ⁸⁰ , Examination system not discussed ⁸¹ , Equipment handling in labs ⁸² , Internal assessments ⁸³ , Create study schedule ⁸⁴ , heavy course load ⁸⁵ , Learning effectively ⁸⁶ , Family life ⁸⁷

programme run in Nepal having duration of a week⁵. However, short orientation programmes were also in practice like one that was conducted in Caribbean School comprising of only 2 days & in India which comprised of three days^{18,6}.

Our respondents comprised of 60% females and 40% male students similar to the one carried

The orientation program run over the week was basically meant to familiarize the students about the college, curriculum, colleagues and faculty. The students felt that the programme would have a great impact on their future as it would help them to overcome the upcoming challenges and build up their confidence. A study carried out in Sargodha also found out that the

orientation program was an opportunity for the students to build a strong basis for future endeavor and accomplishments⁴. In another study the students found it useful as it had made them more confident to take up future challenges of medical profession¹⁹. The concept was presented differently in a study where students claimed that Orientation Programme indicated the future requirements to become a good doctor¹⁸.

The students learned that apart from the studies; ethical behavior, improved communication skills, patient consent and professionalism was an essential part of their medical career. Various studies showed that students themselves valued ethics and professionalism. They believed that medical profession had numerous dimensions including professionalism, ethics and social responsibilities²⁰.

The students statements saying a balanced professional life and different professions within the medical field landscaped the concept of teaching holistically. In the era of 21st century medicine is not just to treat the patient but it starts from primordial prevention to rehabilitation. Thus teaching the students holistically will help them to make pace with the growing world of medicine.

Orientation week generated a concept of research in the students. They were sensitized to start thinking about it and come up with different ideas on which medical research could be done. They were keen to know the research work, research engines and research methodology. The link between spread and control of infection interested them the most.

The students stated that the orientation week had transformed their concepts of better human beings and patient care. The lectures on Kuddi and teaching of RUMI enabled them to learn the concepts of sympathy and empathy. A research carried out in Canada also found out that student came to know that it wasn't just the transfer of knowledge actually it was a beginning of a lifelong transformation process²¹.

The lectures delivered in orientation program were of different styles, in addition the students were taught about different learning styles which enabled them to know about the concept of interactive teaching. The usual directive way of teaching seemed futile to them and they found new teaching methodologies innovative and interesting. A study carried out in Karachi also found out that students regarded interactive teaching very effective because they gained more knowledge and had more interaction with the teachers²².

White coat ceremony at end of the week was regarded very interesting and symbolic. The students were appraised of the basis and responsibility attached to white coats first followed by donning. Some studies labeled white coat as a symbol for doctors while the rest regarded it useless if the doctor wearing it didn't acquire characteristics of a good physician²¹.

Meeting with the faculty and seeing the institution had drawn upon the students that it would be a great learning opportunity and they would make good use of it. Good learning can only be possible by combination of a good instructor, a receptive pupil and a conducive environment. A research "Foundation programme: A students perspective" also found out that students linked learning with good experienced teachers and interactive faculty¹⁹.

There were certain aspects on which the students wanted more guidance and talk. It included the elaboration of examination system and books to read. In addition, they also needed guidance on time management and how to balance their family and college life in such a busy schedule. A study on evaluation of Orientation Programme also supported that stress, time management and skills to study were the least understood domains²³.

CONCLUSION

Our study concluded that the students found the orientation week very useful. The topics discussed were of great relevance and time allocated was adequate. However, it unfolded a

couple of topics that needed more elaboration which can be incorporated in the upcoming years to make the orientation week program more relevant to the needs of the medical students.

Author's Contribution

Concept and design: Prof. Dr. Musarat Ramzan

Collection and assembly of data: Dr. Khola Waheed Khan

Analysis and interpretation of the data: Prof. Dr. Musarat Ramzan and Saana bibi

Drafting of article: Dr. Khola Waheed Khan

Critical revision of the article for important intellectual content: Prof. Dr. Musarat Ramzan

Statistical expertise: Prof. Dr. Musarat Ramzan and Saana bibi

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LIMITATION OF STUDY

Delayed college admissions shortens the duration of the orientation week. Because of this some sessions were not given enough time Proper information on various topics e.g. recommended books, time management and library usage had not been conveyed.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This study has no conflict of interest to declare by any author.

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