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BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF MEDICAL ETHICS AMONG DENTAL STUDENTS A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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Medical Ethics deals with the moral principles which guide members of the medical profession in their professional dealings with each other, their patients and also the state. Dental surgeons registered with the Sri Lanka Medical Council are expected to abide by the principals of ethics accepted and practiced by the Sri Lanka Medical Council. The doctor- patient relationship is the central focus of ethics in Medicine and Dentistry. Reasons for this are that ethics has to do with actions involving help or harm to others. In Medicine and Dentistry the doctor is the agent and the principal recipient is the patient. Control of the relationship results from the power of the doctor, and ethical standards help guide this power. Most interactions in the health care delivery system have over a long period evolved, some aspects of these interactions are the, doctor-patient relationship providing continuity, privacy, development of mutual responsibility and others. There are rapid changes in the extension of this relationship that bear on these interactions in significant ways making it more complex, like third party payers, insurance, policies of professional groups, private practice, medical institutions, etc. The image of doctor-patient relationship has to be well established and improved in our country for well being of our society

The main objective of this study is to assess the level of basic knowledge of medical ethics among dental students who will practice in various capacities after qualifying. Another objective is to formulate the medical ethics teaching programme in Faculty of Dental Sciences for the dental students after assessing their basic knowledge. A sample of 126 dental students in clinical and preclinical years were randomly selected and a questionnaire was distributed in a classroom in the presence of the investigator. Results were analyzed subsequently.

The results show that 34% students have had lectures on Medical ethics, 65.9% have not had such lectures. 0 % of students have faced " ethical dilemmas " , 27 % students have kept the question blank. 9.5% revealed that they are competent to diagnose an ethical dilemma , while 57.1% students revealed they were not competent, 33.3% kept that question blank. 55.5% students thought they need professional instructions to tackle ethical dilemma, 3.96% thought they do not need professional instructions, while 40.5% students kept the question blank. 49.5% of students had heard about the Hippocratic Oath while 37.1% had not heard about it, 13.3% kept the question blank. In their opinion 88.6% thought they need to learn medical ethics as dental students, while 11.4% kept the question blank. 79.2% thought it is necessary to update the knowledge ethics, 5.7% said it is not necessary to update while 18.0% kept the question blank. 55% thought patients should be aware on their basic medical rights while 7% thought patients should not be aware while 38% kept the question blank.