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Short Communication

Attitude of interns towards research as a career option

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ABSTRACT

Although today's Ayurvedic graduates have many career options to select from, they are not given any exposure to these options during their study. This results in apathy towards selection of any career apart from clinical practice. The present study carried out amongst interns of one Ayurvedic college highlights this fact and underlines the importance of introducing 'research' as a subject in the curriculum.

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1. Background

Today there are many promising opportunities available for Ayurvedic graduates after completing the studies. Broadly, there are five areas which are available for a BAMS graduate to build a career successfully viz. clinical practice, academic (teaching), management & administration, drug manufacturing and research.

Research is a process of searching the knowledge by systematic investigation and to establish novel facts by scientific methods. Medical research has lot of importance as it is much needed for the addition of knowledge and thereby to improve health care [1]. It can be achieved by various methods of research ranging from drug trials to community surveys and from trends in the past years to unusual cases in the hospital.

Even though variety of approaches are available, the scenario of medical research in India is not encouraging. The undergraduate medical research is still a rare phenomenon. There are reports available mentioning facts & figures about the modern medical undergraduate students level research and also discussing the potential reasons behind this apathy [2,3]. The situation of the global undergraduate medical research is far better. Considering the

global scenario, the Medical Council of India is focusing more on the improvement of medical research and emphasizing the same even at undergraduate level.

In case of Ayurveda, although the research culture is slowly gaining pace, the Undergraduate students are not educated or motivated in this direction. The present study reports the attitude of interns in an Ayurveda Teaching Hospital about Research as a career.

2. Methodology

We carried out a cross sectional study among the interns of the KLEU's BMK Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Belgaum, wherein the interns (n = 40) were asked to prioritize their career options from research, teaching and clinical practice. These responses were taken in writing. Further, they were asked to describe the rationale behind their career preferences. Lastly, the interested candidates were asked to enroll their names for the ongoing research projects in the college. This whole exercise was done at the end of a lecture, which was arranged as a part of routine activities for the interns as an institutional norm.

3. Results

The career options prioritized by the interns are summarized in Table 1. Out of 40 interns, 36 preferred clinical practice as first career priority, whereas 4 selected teaching as option. Research was chosen as second priority by 18 and third priority by 22 interns.

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Table 1
Career options of interns (n = 40).

	First priority	Second priority	Third priority
Research	0	18	22
Teaching	4	21	15
Clinical Practice	36	1	3

When asked about the rationale behind this priority, they unanimously opined that Ayurveda is a clinical science and they have opted for a medical degree, hence clinical practice obviously becomes their first preference. They also feel that treating the patients and thereby helping mankind is a noble job and they would be happier to take up this job. Further, they have ‘experienced’ that the physician who treats the patients receives high regards in the society and that is why their preference is towards clinical practice. Interestingly, although they could justify their first preference towards clinical practice reasonably well; they could not provide any justification for their preference towards research. Rather, they expressed their inability to comment anything about research.

Regarding enrollment to the research projects, only 4 out of 40 interns showed their inclination towards such activity.

4. Discussion

The present study was carried out to know the attitudes of the interns towards research as career option in an Ayurvedic Teaching Hospital. We observed that none of them considered research as the first profession priority. This may be because they are not exposed to the research methodology and importance of research during their undergraduate studies. Further, the current curriculum does neither include terms like evidence base, data generation nor the introduction to findings of major nationwide research projects such as CSIR-NMITLI, a science initiative in Ayurveda.

The Central Council for Indian Medicine (CCIM) has introduced research as a subject in final year Ayurvedic (BAMS) students, which is welcoming step. Although this will impart theoretical knowledge, it would prove more impactful if coupled with practical training. The students during their undergraduate studies rarely get an opportunity to visit a research institute or get hands-on-training in certain techniques. The same thing is reflected in the career options prioritized by the interns participated in our study. We therefore suggest that an elective module exclusively in research can be introduced during the internship tenure, wherein the interested students can be posted at a research institute for a period of two months or so.

For the students of modern medicine (MBBS), various schemes and programmes are available such as ICMR Short Term Studentship (STS), KVPY (Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana), conferences for medical students [4] and so on. MBBS students are eligible to get SRF through which they can work on a research project for three

years and can extend the work by registering to PhD. It is offered by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and University Grants Commission (UGC). Such provisions should be made available even for Ayurvedic students [1].

We further feel that if the students are exposed to the research methodology in their undergraduate days, they will be in a better position to conduct full-fledged research studies during their postgraduate tenure. This will certainly help to improve the standards of MD/MS dissertations and PhD theses. Vaidya-Scientist fellowship programme [5] to train the candidates in the *Shastras*, science and medicine along with exposure to appropriate research methodology is an ambitious programme, which not only needs to be continued but also to be strengthened by increasing intake capacity.

Our study thus highlights the ignorance (and therefore apathy) of interns towards research as career option. However, it must be noted here that the study has not been conducted in structured way. The sample size is very small and has been taken from only one college. This makes the results less generalizable and it would be desirable to carry out such study in different colleges across the country involving a larger sample size.

To sum up, the career preferences given by interns in our study indicates “conventional” approach towards medical education. There is need to change their attitudes through appropriate training [6] and by introducing different programmes to foster the research culture.

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Nil

Conflict of interest

None declared.

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