

Assessment of Attitude towards Anatomy as a Prospective Career among MBBS Students

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Abstract

Introduction: Anatomy is an important subject in medical sciences. The knowledge of structure of the human body from the naked eye appearance (gross anatomy) down to molecular level is fundamental to understanding its function and how both structure and function are modified by disease processes. A decline and dearth of anatomy lecturers to match the number of medical schools and increasing student populations has been reported in USA and India. More medical schools are springing up in Nigeria.

Materials and Methods: The present study was carried out in Kurnool Medical College, Kurnool, AP. A total of two hundred undergraduate students were selected randomly. This included students from first year to the final year. With the help of persons belonging to departments not included in the present study, they were informed about the study and their verbal consent was taken. In this way, they were kept in dark regarding which department was involved in conducting the study so that they feel free to give their opinion. The students were also assured that the information so collected would be used only for study purpose. Due permission from the concerned authority was taken before commencement of the study. Each student was given a set of questionnaires and were asked to provide a response. The findings were analyzed later on. Data were imputed into SPSS version 13, analyzed, and presented in simple frequency. Variables were compared using the chi-squared test and statistical significance inferred at $P < 0.05$.

Results: A set of questionnaire was given to three hundred undergraduate students and their responses were compiled. Only 9(3%) students opted for anatomy as a career choice. Majority, 239(79.6%) of the students preferred to go for a clinical subject in future. Anatomy also rated poorly in terms of financial benefit & social status. The present study shows that the students possess a negative attitude towards anatomy which needs to be changed urgently.

Conclusion: Anatomy as a subject is perceived positively by clinical medical students, but the choice as a career option is low. Increasing the use of radiological methods and computer-assisted methods in learning anatomy may increase students' interest in the subject. Further studies on the reasons for the noted differences in the perception and performance of females in anatomy course will enable modifications to effect a change.

Key Words: Anatomy, questionnaire, attitude

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I. Introduction

Anatomy is an important subject in medical sciences. The knowledge of structure of the human body from the naked eye appearance (gross anatomy) down to molecular level is fundamental to understanding its function and how both structure and function are modified by disease processes. A decline and dearth of anatomy lecturers to match the number of medical schools and increasing student populations has been reported in USA and India. More medical schools are springing up in Nigeria.

Medical doctors remain a potential and important source of anatomy teachers. Teaching of gross anatomy to preclinical students by surgeons in the USA provided clinical adjuncts and offered assistance to professional anatomists and anatomy course directors. Medical doctors also serve as temporary anatomy lecturers to fill the gap of declining medically qualified anatomy lecturers in the UK. Practical and clinical adjunct to lectures was considered by ~90% of medical students as having the potential of making learning more interesting and easier to remember.

The choice of career path by doctors is influenced by a number of factors. Career progression, on-call commitment, a teacher as a role model, love of anatomy, and interest in the subject were the top five factors influencing the choice of career among 169 medical students in Dundee. In addition to personal interest and life style, income also influences the choice of career among medical students. Sanfeh *et al*, reported the influence of gender on career choice. The interest in a specialty is aroused during training and has an important influence on career choice.

A previous study in Nigeria reported only 1.5% of preclinical medical students desirous of taking a career in teaching anatomy. In India, although medical students understood and noted the usefulness of anatomy to their training, 30% indicated interest in anatomy as a career if options of research and job opportunities were made available. The choice of career is affected by interest aroused during training and evolves during training; nevertheless, doctors are now encouraged to choose a career path at an early stage in medical training.

Clinical year medical students who have successfully completed anatomy courses should have received maximal potential for arousal of interest in anatomy as career choice. Moreover, current exposure to clinical practice affords them the opportunity of a more objective comparison in contrast to their pre-clinical counterparts.

This study was conducted to determine the choice of anatomy as a career option among clinical year medical students in a Kurnool Medical College, Kurnool.

II. Materials And Methods

The present study was carried out in Kurnool Medical College, Kurnool, AP. A total of two hundred undergraduate students were selected randomly. This included students from first year to the final year. With the help of persons belonging to departments not included in the present study, they were informed about the study and their verbal consent was taken. In this way, they were kept in dark regarding which department was involved in conducting the study so that they feel free to give their opinion. The students were also assured that the information so collected would be used only for study purpose. Due permission from the concerned authority was taken before commencement of the study. Each student was given a set of questionnaires and were asked to provide a response. The findings were analysed later on. Data were imputed into SPSS version 13, analyzed, and presented in simple frequency. Variables were compared using the chi-squared test and statistical significance inferred at $P < 0.05$.

III. Results

Pathology	Medicine	Surgery	Anatomy	Obstetrics and Gynecology	Ophthalmology
28	48	44	15	38	27

Table 1: Showing the Subject Preference as a Career

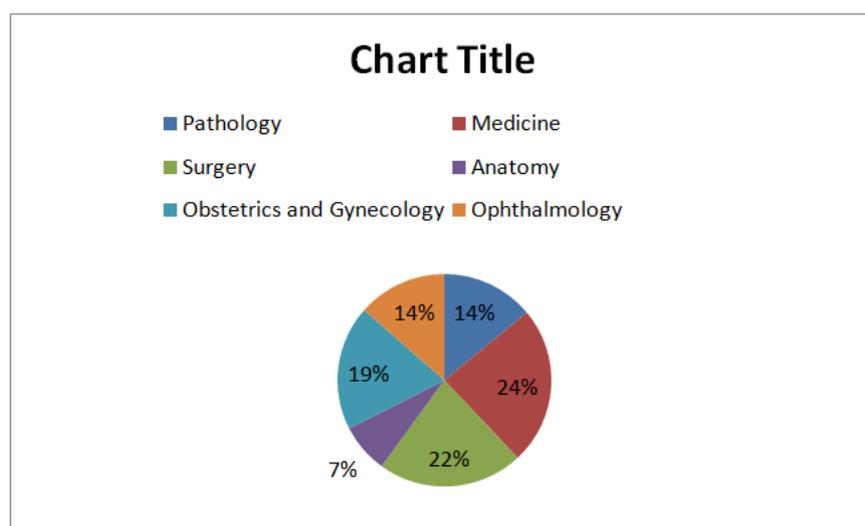


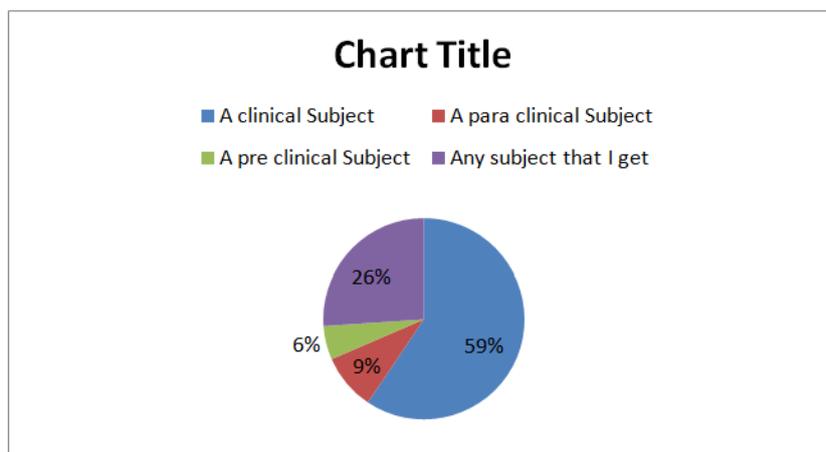
Figure 1: Subject preference as a career

Interesting Subject	Financial benefit	Prestige among the public	Holds a bright future	Patient care	Rapidly advancing
18	53	40	32	21	36

Table 2: Showing the reason behind the chosen subject

A Clinical Subject	A Para Clinical Subject	A Pre Clinical Subject	Any Subject that I get
98	15	09	43

Table 3: Showing subject preference as career after Graduation



Subjects	Very Much	Moderate	Very Little
Pathology	50	136	96
Medicine	127	143	18
Surgery	161	103	40
Anatomy	21	103	165
OBG	150	112	26
ophthalmology	89	83	113

Table 4: Showing students likeness for different Subjects

In the present study, it was found that majority of the students (79.6%) preferred a clinical subject over para-clinical (3.6%) and pre-clinical (3.3%) subjects as a career in future. Infact, anatomy ranked very poorly (3%) as compared to other subjects. Students also believe that clinical subjects are financially rewarding, more prestigious and satisfactory. When asked if they will try to take up the subject their family wants for post graduation, 232(77.3%) students agreed. When asked to estimate the degree to which they like the subjects, anatomy was liked very much by only 21 students.

IV. Discussion

The non-clinical teaching specialities are opted for by very few students.(2) The fresh students don't even mention anatomy as a choice of postgraduation.(3,4) The findings of the present study too confirms this fact. This attitude of the students towards anatomy is probably due to the discomfort and uneasiness they experienced during their first year of MBBS course.(5,6,7,8,9) In this study, only 9(3%)students opted for anatomy as a career while 10(3.3%)said that they might take up a preclinical subject but not anatomy.(1) The possible reason for declining interest in anatomy could be multiple starting with the experience of first year in the dissection hall. This is indeed a matter of concern as it predicts acute shortage of teaching faculty in years to come.(10)

Majority of the students, 146(48.6%) opted for a clinical subject as a career because of its financial benefit and prestige in the society.(11,12,13) It is true that persons associated with professions involving preclinical subjects experience limited financial returns.(14) Moreover, research opportunities in the field of anatomy is very limited in our country which could be yet another reason for not choosing it as a career. If facilities like cytogenetic laboratory is made available in the anatomy department of every medical college, students might start giving it a second thought about anatomy as a prospective career. Efforts should be made to make the students realize that anatomy is a very interesting subject and has made tremendous advances over the past few decades. With better understanding of cross- sectional anatomy, neuro-anatomy and embryology, we, the anatomists can help the students overcome the difficulties in becoming a better doctor. This gives as much satisfaction as treating a patient in pain.

V. Conclusion

Anatomy as a subject is perceived positively by clinical medical students, but the choice as a career option is low. Increasing the use of radiological methods and computer-assisted methods in learning anatomy may increase students' interest in the subject. Further studies on the reasons for the noted differences in the perception and performance of females in anatomy course will enable modifications to effect a change.

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