

## **Health of our Future Health Professionals**

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Student life is the learning and training phase. This is important; it is shaping and becoming stage of a professional. Present stage of student life is, in true sense, the basis of future professional career and conduct when the knowledge, skills, ability, tendency, trait, character and virtues of a future professional imbibe into the person. As morning shows the day, the attributes of our students<sup>1</sup> determine our future professional direction and progress to a great extent. Health science fields are important as they deal with most sensitive and essential issues, like: life, health and death. Hence, medical/ health science student life is and need to be a matter of a great concern.

The WHO definition of health has relatively clearly established and been extending the dimensions from physical to mental and social, and also to spiritual aspects.<sup>2</sup> Health of the students too encompasses and should incorporate these components of holistic, not merely certain stereotypic, elements. Along with strong healthy body, they need sound mind and balanced social life and conduct. For a successful career in a health science field, realization of and strival for the life aim is rather indispensable. For student life to be fruitful and smooth, their health is, hence, of the utmost importance.

Through literature and our observation, we time and again realize that student life is a most strenuous/ stressful one;<sup>3</sup> particularly the MBBS/ MD courses have been recognized as a toughest course in the world with a long

duration. Strenuous in itself the health science/ medical training is associated also with other stressors and stressful circumstances for our students. In our study on medical students of BPKIHS, some student subjects reported that they joined health science/ medical education because of their parents' pressure or wish.<sup>3</sup> In other study among nursing students and staff; stressors related to institute, faculty, geography and other factors were also reported.<sup>4</sup> They usually have to leave and stay away from home and care taking figures (parents) for the study.<sup>3</sup> The four usually reported sources/ areas of the stress among them include: academic pressure, emotional factors, social issues and financial problems. Ragging involve psychosocial issues in context of academic institute, including ours.<sup>5</sup>

As the role model of future health professional themselves usually demonstrate badly regarding self-care,<sup>6</sup> our students cannot be expected to do better. Not only they get bad role model, but also are exposed to various risk factors when they are not mature enough to wisely analyze. They receive information/ knowledge, skills, technology, facilities, gadgets and resources, and access to medications (including psychoactive substances) when they are not prepared enough about self-care, ethics and holistic approach. We realize that health science/ medical curriculum is largely yet to incorporate holistic approach including ethics.<sup>7</sup> For example, they may be informed about anatomy, physiology and pharmacology exposing them to various inadvertent and enticing risks; like- substance, sex addiction, digital games, inactivity or other unhealthy unacceptable behavior when not complimented with judicious instillation of ethics and

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discipline and they are not adequately monitored. Such stressor/ adversities not only hamper academic performance,<sup>8</sup> but also may result into reactive conditions, disorders and even complications like violence and suicide.

The quest of and investigation into various aspects of health of these students should receive adequate priority. Though a pioneer institute of our nation with lots of researches conducted every year in different areas at different levels<sup>9</sup>, few of our studies focus on students' health issues and we have limited studies on our students. We need more and more comprehensive, intensive and in-depth studies with the focus on various aspects of health of our students. The current situation (prevalence and burden of various health problems and disorders in general and of specific disorder), etiological factors, consequences of poor management/ prevention, local needs and intervention strategies to tackle them and their effectiveness are some of the areas of research. Our observation replicated that many of our students (about one third) suffer from psychological problems.<sup>3,4</sup> Adjustment disorders, depression, substance problems, low back pain are reported among remarkable proportion of students here in our institute.<sup>3,4,10,11</sup>

Health of our students should be the concern and priority of all; including students themselves, their parents, family, institute, teachers, society and nation; and all should take their respective roles. Students should pay due attention to their own vulnerabilities and risk factors and take every step to minimize them. Being conscious about their own state and trait increasing their vulnerability, they need to learn and adopt strategies. One novel idea for the students could be to form their group or club

with motive mainly to help needy, sick fellow during ill times. Parents should take a balanced approach and exercise wise monitoring of their state and behaviors.

Institute and teachers should adopt holistic curriculum. Education should be based on all domains of Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) and all essential components; i.e. information, skills and attitude/ ethics.<sup>7,12</sup> Such holistic approach will likely translate the students into a professional who will take care of health of self and others, i.e. clients/ patients. Institute should not delay in establishing a Unit which will intensively look into, help needy pupils and also make strategic plans, execute them and monitor their progress and impact for the promotion of health of our future health professionals. Our institute should always strive to keep its environment such that students inculcate the basics of health; i.e. healthy food, healthy behavior and healthy thoughts.

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