

Foundation programme: A student's perspective

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ABSTRACT

Context: Various colleges and universities worldwide develop and implement students' orientation programs to acclimatize them to the campus environment, familiarize them with the teaching programs and its importance has been stressed in the document "Vision 2015" planned by the Medical Council of India (MCI). **Objectives:** To evaluate the feedback questionnaire after conclusion of two day "Foundation Program" for MBBS 2nd Professional students, conducted by the medical education unit at a tertiary care Medical Institute. **Material and Methods:** After the conclusion of two day "Foundation Program", a pre-designed, anonymous questionnaire was received from all the students who participated in the program. **Results:** Of the 100 participants, 67% of the participants labeled the foundation program a very good exercise. Students' view regarding the factors that facilitated their learning were good topics (covered important aspects pertaining to the clinical phases), good presentations, good and experienced speakers, and interactive faculty. **Conclusion:** Such orientation programs lay a strong foundation for better understanding and learning of under-graduate courses, and should be a regular feature in the curriculum.

Key words: Foundation program, medical students, medical teaching

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INTRODUCTION

The Medical Council of India (MCI) is in process of implementing new regulations, namely, "Regulations on Graduate Medical Education, 2012" in order to create Indian Medical Graduate possessing the required knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and responsiveness, so as to function primarily as a physician of first contact of the community, which was emphasized in an earlier document released by the MCI, "Vision 2015" to enhance the quality and standards of medical education and training in India. The medical program is being restructured to make students more participatory and competent. A foundation course for a period of 2 months has been introduced which

aims to orient students to national health scenarios, medical ethics, health economics, learning skills and communication, life support, computer learning, sociology and demographics, biohazard safety, environmental issues, and community orientation.^[1,2] Hence, by conducting foundation programs for the medical students at various levels, the MCI aims to produce more competent and skilled medical personnel. The Foundation programme for medical students should also focus on the development of behavioral competency, methods to familiarize students to campus environment, learning techniques, and ways to facilitate the stress-coping strategies for the students.

Colleges and universities worldwide develop and implement students' orientation programs to acclimatize them to the campus environment, familiarize them with the teaching programs, helping them to adapt to the academic challenges, as they move from high school into undergraduate programs.^[3] Orientation programs are usually organized by the medical colleges for interns to increase their knowledge and efficacy,^[4] but unstructured programs lack training in professional competence, personal characteristics, and formal education.^[5]

The students, after completing their basic education in preclinical subject, are mature enough and also eager

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to learn in-depth about human beings. To cater to their demands and also orient them to the forthcoming teaching curriculum, a structured foundation program was organized. The objective was to sensitize the potential learners with essential knowledge which will lay a sound foundation for their pursuit of learning across the under-graduate program and also in their career of medicine. This paper highlights the salient features of such a foundation program implemented in our institute and the feedback of students regarding the program.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The medical education unit at the institute designed a 2-day program for MBBS 2nd Professional students, including topics of orienting the students to the clinical scenario and some general topics on health and personality development. The lecturers focused on medical ethics, community care, personality development, art of clinical examination, and drug therapy. The faculty of the institute was first instructed regarding the objectives of the foundation program and the interested and specialty expert faculty were selected to deliver the guest lectures on various topics. Faculty of the para-clinical department and medical education unit coordinated the program.

The program began with the inaugural address by the director principal which focused on vision, mission, and objectives of medical education to be followed at the institute and also the national level. To reduce the students' apprehension, a formal faculty introduction was held. Afterwards, presentations were held in an innovative way that included group activity, interactive forum, role play, and clinical bed-side demonstrations, to maintain the attention of a student and make them more receptive. During the last session, open-house discussion focused on the written and verbal feedback from the participants. It gave them time to express their views and impressions regarding the whole foundation

program. Since it was an anonymous questionnaire, no written informed consent was obtained.

RESULTS

The batch consisted of 100 students present on the days of foundation program. The students were selected on merit during the admission to MBBS program (as per the regulations of the MCI and affiliating University) and had completed their MBBS 1st Professional program. In all, ten topics were covered during 2 days foundation program. Students' feedback was essentially based on the criteria of the knowledge gained after the sessions and application of the knowledge in medical profession, on a three-point scale (2 = to great extent, 1 = to some extent, and 0 = not at all) [Table 1].

Grading of the foundation program was done by the students on a 5-point scale of excellent to poor. Overall, 67% of the participants labeled the foundation program a very good exercise, while 2% marked it satisfactory [Table 2].

Students' view regarding the factors that facilitated their learning were good topics (covered important aspects pertaining to the clinical phases), good presentations, good and experienced speakers, and interactive faculty.

Students' view regarding the factors that inhibited their learning were poor technical assistance like poor electricity back-up and sound system, and long duration of the lectures. Various comments and suggestions by the students for the foundation program were – well-coordinated program which helped them to get oriented to the new phase; should be organized every year for 2nd Professional students; getting information regarding the role and responsibilities in medical profession; reduced apprehension of the new subject/ curriculum; inspiring and motivated; and developed confidence to face the challenging medical program.

Table 1: Students' perception regarding the topics

Sessions	Knowledge gain after session			Knowledge essential for medical profession		
	To great extent (%)	To some extent (%)	Not at all (%)	To great extent (%)	To some extent (%)	Not at all (%)
Professional etiquettes and ethics	66	34	-	93	7	-
Art and science of history taking	53	46	1	85	15	-
Art and science of general physical examination	44	54	2	91	8	1
Sensitization to rational use of medicine	68	30	2	89	11	-
Rational utilization of laboratory services	28	69	3	70	27	3
Communication and behavior skills	74	24	2	86	14	-
Community health care	61	33	6	84	14	2
Stress management	67	33	-	90	10	-
Management of time	70	29	1	95	5	-
Study skills and learning techniques	65	31	4	88	10	2

Table 2: Overall grading of foundation program

Grades	Response of students (%)
A (excellent)	15
B (very good)	67
C (good)	16
D (satisfactory)	2
E (poor)	0

DISCUSSION

Teaching the students so that they acquire a sound medical knowledge and skill is not the only role of a teacher; to impart appropriate behavior and attitudinal skills in order to make them more dedicated health workers, is also the duty of a teacher.

With the advancement in medical education and efforts of MCI to make teaching programs student-oriented, the medical colleges have now started organizing orientation programs at various levels of the program with an aim to familiarize the students with the campus environment, curriculum, and teaching programs, so as to help them to face the academic challenges in the due program.

The academic feast of foundation program was very enthusiastically accepted by the participants as their feedback was very encouraging. Most of the students had gained knowledge to a great extent in the entire topic except for rational utilization of laboratory services and only minority of student didn't gain knowledge from the program. Majority of the students felt that the topics that were selected are essential for the medical profession except for rational utilization of laboratory services [Table 1]. This probably favors that the student have more of a clinical practicing attitude than laboratory personnel.

Majority of students graded the Foundation Programme as a

very good program and none of the students felt that it was poor or unsatisfactory [Table 2] and all the students felt that the foundation programme was useful.

There is need of such programs to lay a strong foundation for the potential medical fraternity. Hence, we recommend that such programs should be conducted regularly in all the medical colleges and at all the levels possible.

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