

A survey on the need of medical education in vernacular language among MBBS students in a medical college of West Bengal

Dr Saraswata Das, Assistant Professor, Department of Radiodiagnosis, College of Medicine & JNM Hospital, Kalyani

Introduction

Traditionally, English has been the medium of instruction for teaching modern medicine in India.

However, since last year, Madhya Pradesh has started offering MBBS course in Hindi. Uttarakhand & Uttar Pradesh plan to do it soon.

Tamil Nadu government has expressed its intention to start MBBS course in Tamil.

Moreover, in April 2023, UGC has urged universities to allow students to write exams in regional languages even if the course is in English medium.

In this backdrop, the present survey aims to find out the felt need amongst first year MBBS students of COMJNMH.

Methodology

- **Study design:** Descriptive
- **Study type:** Cross-sectional study
- **Target population:** MBBS students of COMJNMH
- **Study population:** All MBBS students of COMJNMH
- **Inclusion criteria:** MBBS students of COMJNMH willing to participate
- **Exclusion criteria:** MBBS students who do not wish to participate
- **Study area:** COMJNMH Kalyani
- **Study duration:** One month
- **Sample size:** 108
- **Sampling** (Recruitment of the participants): Consecutive sampling
- **Tools/ Description of procedure:** Data was collected from willing MBBS students of COMJNMH through a Google Form-based online questionnaire.
- **Outcome:** Responses given by the students was automatically collected in a Google Sheet.

Results

Approximately 68.5% of the respondents think that medical colleges in India should prioritize offering medical education in vernacular languages.

Approximately 40% feel that bilingual approach is the ideal approach to medical education in India with regards to the language of instruction.

72.9% of the respondents feel that offering medical education in vernacular languages could help address healthcare disparities in underserved communities.

Approximately 45% of the respondents feel that it is very important to have textbooks and reference materials available in the vernacular language.

Around 63% respondents feel that students should be allowed to write exams in regional languages even if the course is in English medium.

A whopping majority of 62% of the respondents feel that learning medical education in the native language can promote better communication between medical professionals and patients.

Limitations of the study

Not a multicentre study

Opinion of other stakeholders, e.g. teachers, parents, patients, language experts, etc. not included

Same yardstick might not be suitable for different semesters of MBBS students

No concrete policy decision can be taken based on only the students' perspectives

Conclusion

There is a felt need for introduction of medical education in vernacular language.

Keeping in view the social and cultural diversity among the entrants to medical colleges, bilingual option might be the best approach for medical education in India.

A balance needs to be struck between the goal of preparing doctors who can interact globally and the goal of removing the learning disabilities amongst a sizeable section of Indian medical students.

The issue of medical education in vernacular medium is a sensitive one and further steps should be taken after due deliberations with all the stakeholders.