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ATTEMPT OF COMPARISON OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS AMONG POLISH AND SWISS STUDENTS OF MEDICAL UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

Introduction:

A high level of communication skills of medical personnel significantly improves the effectiveness of treatment managed by an interdisciplinary team, quality of health care, including patient and personnel safety, as well as patient and family satisfaction with health services.

Aim:

The study attempted to evaluate attitudes towards development of communication skills among Polish and Swiss students of medical universities

Material:

The study enrolled a total of 343 students (women: n=278, 81%): from Poland (n=229; 66.8%) and Switzerland (n=114, 33.2%, University of Basel). Polish students represented seven universities, the largest number of students being from Warsaw Medical University (n=143, 41.7%), Collegium Medicum in Bydgoszcz (n=53, 15.5%), and the University of Rzeszów (n=22, 6.4%). The respondents studied at a total of 11 faculties, with students of medicine comprising the largest proportion (n=137, 39.9%), followed by students of nursing (n=77, 22.4%) and obstetrics (n=35, 10.2%). Most respondents studied full-time (n=332, 96.8%) and were first-cycle students (n=222, 64.7%). Subgroups comprising the first-year students (n=117, 34.1%), second-year students (n=77, 22.4%), and third-year students (n=68, 19.8%) were most numerous. Mean age of the study group amounted to 22.63 years (median: 22; min. 19, max. 55, SD: 2.75).

Methods:

The study was conducted with the use of a standardised questionnaire Communication Skills Attitude Scale (CSAS). The survey was performed in March and April 2017 using two electronic questionnaires: Polish and English language versions. Questionnaire reliability was evaluated with Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.775. The approval of the Ethical Review Board of Warsaw Medical University was not necessary due to the nature of the study (non-invasive survey conducted among students).

Results:

A vast majority of the respondents (n=338, 98.5%) agreed that they need to have good communication skills in order to be able to do their work well. A vast majority of students (n=250, 72.9%) believed that acquiring communication skills is as important as learning medicine and it develops team working skills (n=306, 89.2%). When asked to self-assess their communication skills, students rated their competence related to communication with patients and other staff members as good or very good (n=235, 68.5% and n=222, 64.7%, respectively).

Conclusion:

The study group agreed that education in communication skills is very important and crucial for taking up employment in a health profession. Therefore, despite a high level of self-assessment, it needs to be considered whether to include communication-related issues in the teaching contents.

Keywords: Skills, curriculum, soft skills, Communication Skills Scale.