

Studying Freaks?: Medical students and the community

Areeba Altaf, Syed Raza Shah, Natasha Maqsood

Madam, medicine is considered a coveted profession throughout the world but with that comes a great deal of pressure and commitment. Years in a medical school are primarily a time of resilience, determination, and sacrifice. Students often mention changes in their interpersonal relations, daily lifestyle and stress or depression related health problems. Not surprisingly, there is evidence present on negative effects of medical school on the students. Unfortunately, healthcare professionals are prone to depression, substance abuse and suicide.¹ Moreover, several studies are suggestive of the fact that there is a high prevalence of depression and anxiety amongst medical students in comparison to the general population and same age peers.²

It has been observed that first year undergraduates have a higher mental health scores with better social functioning and general health perception as compared to senior students proving that, by time, medical students go through health and social deterioration.³ Also noted in these studies was that anxiety and depression was higher in 2nd year students as compared to 3rd and 4th year students which can be attributed to adapting to a new environment and an obligation to succeed.² Emphasising on the social and personal troubles, academic life is time-consuming such that medical students hardly get time for recreation, family, friends and their social circles.⁴ Cutting down on social life leads to social withdrawal, taking an enormous physical and emotional toll on a student.

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3rd Year Students, Dow University of Health Sciences (DUHS), Karachi, Pakistan.

Correspondence: Syed Raza Shah. Email: syedraza91shah@live.com

Indeed, students spend less time on leisure activities like visiting friends and using the computer.⁵ Many students succumb to time constraints, pressure, and neglect their own well-being. This is one of the major obstacles a medical student faces, leading to anxiety, depression, broken social relations, disturbed health and psychiatric problems.^{4,5}

Medical school can be tough and it is easy to feel completely alone. This is not to say medical school is not good. But without support, it can be troublesome. It is important for the faculty to be aware of consequences and outcome of student's suffering during medical school. Hence, it is important to create a sense of community in a medical school surrounded with mentors who would consistently support and motivate a student. Evidence proves that vigorous exercise is a good way of losing stress for students.⁵ Thereby, steps should be taken on an emergency footing to promote such healthy events at institutional level, regularly and made mandatory for all the respective students.

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