

Do you cheat???

Academic Dishonesty among Undergraduate Medical Students.

Manzoor Hussain*, Numan Majeed**, Aneela Amber*, Sahar Khalid*, M Ahsan Rashid*

Abstract:

Background: Though doctors are considered to be respectful role models of professionalism and ethics, but medical students are no strangers to academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is not only an un-ethical behavior, but may also have life threatening consequences.

Aims: Aim of study is to assess the knowledge, Attitude, behavior and practice of undergraduate medical students.

Methodology: The Study was descriptive and cross sectional in nature, questionnaire was self-administered semi structured and was pilot tested on a sample of 5 students from Muhammad medical college before the final administration on students from different colleges. Study was carried out in 4 different colleges Punjab medical college, Quaid-e-Azam medical college, Nishtar medical college and Muhammad medical college of two provinces (Punjab & Sindh) of Pakistan. The sample size taken was 10% population of students from 3rd year to final year; the response rate was 49%. Data analysis was done using SPSS 17. Ethical approval was taken from our hospital research ethics committee (NO 140911/REC/045).

Results: Out of 110 students 64.8% admitted that they have dishonest behavior, most of the students said that they started at MBBS level 39.1%, 19.1% started cheating in under matric classes. Majority 69.6% students said that they cheated during theory examination. Regarding marking proxy 76.4% students said that they are involved in marking proxy of friends or ask the friends to mark their attendance, while some students 29.3% consider that marking proxy is not an un-ethical thing. 46.5% students coping assignments of their friends while 19.8% students got relaxation from examiner to ask right answers from nearby students. 13.7% students used personal approach during viva examination to get good grades. Amongst those who admitted cheating said that they cheat only to pass were 87.8% while only 12.2% said they cheated to get gain positions.

Conclusion: Our study reveals that medical dishonesty is practiced by many students.

Remarks: academic dishonesty is a very unhealthy habit. Especially in the field of medicine where human lives are at stake. Appropriate and strict measures should be taken to stop this ill practice.

Keywords: Academic dishonesty, cheating, medical students.

Introduction:

Medical profession is considered most respectful and responsible profession among all the professions. The responsibilities are the main thing which polishes this profession by every mean. Act of responsibility make a doctor most famous and respectful man among the communities. But there are some unethical behaviors adopted by the medical students (who are the coming professionals) which lead to bad effect on the personality, knowledge and practice of a doctor. Among the other unethical behavior medical dishonesty is one of them. By the term academic dishonesty we consider an unethical mean used in academic

session for the purpose to get good marks or just to pass exam. There are many sources through which academic dishonesty occurs. Various ways are plagiarism, fabrication, deception, or cheating. If we go through the history of academic dishonesty, scholars note that cheating was prevalent on the Chinese civil service thousands of years ago even when cheating carried the penalty of death for the both examinee and examiner. In late 19th and early 20th century cheating was wide spread at the college level in the United States. It has been estimated that as many as two third of the students cheated at some point of college career at the turn of 20th centuries. Academic dishonesty is endemic in all level of education, US studies show 20% students cheat at first grad 56% in middle school and 70% started cheating at high school. As concern to medical education, academic dishonesty occurs at different level which leads to life threatening effect in the field of medicine. As dishonesty occurs among the medical students, it may result in lack of medical knowledge and that may directly affect the practice of a good doctor and may harm to the patient which is not acceptable. It has been suggested that as medical student progress the burden and

1. Student final (5th) year Muhammad Medical College, Mirpurkhas
2. Student final (5th) year Muhammad Medical College, Mirpurkhas
3. Student final (5th) year Muhammad Medical College, Mirpurkhas
4. Student final (5th) year Muhammad Medical College, Mirpurkhas
5. Student final (5th) year Muhammad Medical College, Mirpurkhas

.*=corresponding author :

Email: a1num86@gmail.com

stress of study increase which force them to involve in such activity.

Methodology::

the study was descriptive and cross sectional in nature, the questionnaire were self-administered semi structured and was pilot tested on a sample of 5 students of Muhammad medical college Mirpurkhas Sindh before going through the full administration of study at 4 medical colleges of Pakistan during Aug. 2011. There were one private medical college, Muhammad medical college Mirpurkhas Sindh, other three public institute of Punjab Quaid e Azam medical college Bahawalpur, Nishtar medical college Multan and Punjab medical college Feisal Abad. Including criteria was design on the basis of experience of medical educational exam, so the students of 1st and 2nd year MBBS were excluded from our study, remaining three classes of undergraduate degree were included. Sample size of 65 students per each institute of Punjab and 30 from MMC collectively to 225 students were the sample size. Questionnaires were distributed to the students randomly in the college and were asked to return responding researcher after answering. Out of 225 only 110 students return the questionnaire in time, so response rate was considered 49%.

Ethical approval was taken from our Hospital research ethics committee (NO.140911/REC/045).

Results:

Out of 3000 of 3rd, 4th and final year MBBS students of 4 public and private medical college of Pakistan. 225 students were enrolled in this study while the response rate was 49%. Most of the students said that they started at MBBS level 39.1%, 19.1% started cheating in under matric classes. Majority 69.6% students said that they cheated during theory examination.. In our study 64.8% students admitted that they were involved in cheating in medical education at any level. 69.6% students said that they cheat in examination by asking right answers or copying the answers sheets of their friend. A large no of 76.4% were involved in marking proxy. On asking about the ethnicity of marking proxy 29.03% don't consider that marking proxy is an unethical behavior. Our study showed that different ways were used to cheat during exam , various method used during exam were, coping the answer sheets of other students 69.6%, cell phone 29%, cribs notes 20.2%, while 19.5% told that they were given relaxation to cheat at some extent in exam. During the examination 28.62% students were caught on the account of cheating and paper were taken from 33% of them who were caught. Among all these situation 42.7% students among those who were caught said that they were given relaxation and paper was given back to continue remaining paper. During the examination favourism or relaxation to some students is also seen. About 19.85% students got relaxation from teacher to cheat by asking right answers, sliding spotting, from students or relevant

teacher. 13.7% students got favor's in viva exam through personal approach to faculty, While 46.5% were found to involve in copying assignments while all those who cheat were ask why they cheat, 87.8% students said they cheat to pass exam while only 12.2% cheat to get good marks. Comparative ratios of different factors in male to female are shown in Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4

Discussion.

Many studies have been done on this topic; most disturbing fact regarding study is that not all but majority of student are admitted to cheat at college at any level. Comparison of our study with other studies done at various institutes of various countries showed that academic dishonesty is present in every country but rate of academic dishonesty vary from country to country. Our study showed that 64.8%of the medical students are admitted to cheat at college level, same study done at united state showed that '70% of students from US have admitted cheating at some point during their college days, Another Russian study showed that 64% Russian students admitted to cheat, Our study have more similarity to the study done at Russia while other facts if we see , another international study about academic dishonest behavior , it is most disturbing and unbelievable fact that 84% of polish undergraduate admitted doing so (Lupton et al 2000; Lupton & chapman 2002;stephens et al 2010).

Majority of the students included in our study are known to admit in dishonest behavior from under matric class and this dishonest behavior has influenced on the undergraduate and post-graduation career. A study over this correlation has been done that showed that there is evidence to suggest that dishonest behavior in medical school or even earlier in high school correlates with same patterns in later life and is even seen to increase [1].

One of the most disturbing fact regarding academic dishonesty is that those who cheat in medical schools are known to cheat later on the patient care too [2], [3].

76.4% of the students included in our study accepted that they were involved in marking proxy or ask friend to mark their proxy in the class. This unethical behavior shows the negligence of administration who gave the opportunities to the student to do so. A similar study at India show that about 75% of students have given proxy for attendance and 39% of them consider it as an offence. [4]

For similar in our study 29.3% consider that marking proxy is not an unethical behavior.

Not only marking proxy but 46.5% students in this study were found to involve in copying assignments while 28.11% student falsify to submit the assignments, deposit copying assignment. There is the academic misconduct behavior before examination, during the examination 69.6% population of this study said that they were involved in cheating during exam by copying the answer sheets of other students while 20.2% used unfair docu-

ments like cribs notes 27.3% used cell phone. Similar for copying answer sheet during exam what is prevalence of cheating by medical student in India? A study at India 88% of medical and paramedical students revealed to have cheated at examination. (Sherief et al 2000) [5].

While in Pakistan and India cheating (copy rate is too much high) but in British students only 2% confessed copying at the degree examination [6].

During the examination favourism or relaxation to some students is also seen. About 19.85% students got relaxation from teacher to cheat by asking right answers, sliding spotting, from students or relevant teacher. Similarly in a report from India that faculty was involved in disclosing slides, spotters, to students during exam. (Gintanjali 2004) but personal approach to viva examination in our society is increasing and about 13.7% people got good grades during viva exam by personal approach. Personal approaches are also found in other societies but less common 5% students get good grade by the influence of personal approach [4]

Conflict of interest:

There was no conflict of interest in the authors.

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