

Short Communication

Knowledge and awareness of the medical students regarding the scope of the forensic pathology

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Abstract: The field of forensic includes many types of workers. The forensic pathologists are the medical doctors that are involved in the autopsies and other kind of investigations. But many of the medical students are unaware of the forensic pathology and its scope. This study was done to study the knowledge and awareness of the medical students regarding forensic pathology. The study was done at the SMBT medical college and hospital, Dhamangaon, Nasik. The students of the third and final year were selected for the study. The study was done with the help of questionnaires specially prepared for the study and included 10 questionnaire. A total of 159 students were participated in the study. Responses of all the students were collected and analyzed. Out of 159 students, three students didn't mark all questions and were excluded from the study. The knowledge of the necessity of the forensic examination in the sudden or unnatural death was present with 87% of the medical students. Eighty- nine students gave positive response for the utility of using viscera for the histopathological and toxicological analysis for the medico-legal autopsy. The students showed good knowledge and awareness towards forensic pathology. They should be updated with the recent knowledge.

Keywords: Forensic pathology, Forensic sciences, Medical students.

INTRODUCTION:

In legal proceeding evidence is very important and it largely depends upon the work of the forensic specialists. The forensic sciences field is broad and includes many types of workers. Some of them are involved in crime solving. Others, such as forensic social workers or forensic economists, help to resolve different legal issues [1]. Forensic medicine is an interdisciplinary science which applies all the knowledge that medical sciences, widely speaking the natural sciences, have accepted as reliable and scientifically solid facts or processes, and qualitative or quantitative definitions with the help of which accurate and reliable statements can be made [2]. Forensic pathologists are medical doctors who perform autopsies or other investigations for the determination of a cause of death [1]. This study was done to study the

knowledge and awareness of the medical students regarding forensic pathology.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The study was done at the SMBT medical college and hospital, Dhamangaon, Nasik. The students of the third and final year were selected for the study. The study was done with the help of questionnaires specially prepared for the study and included 10 questionnaire. The questionnaires were consisted of knowledge and awareness of the forensic pathology questions like knowledge of the branch, its scope, awareness of autopsy examination, what other types of examinations or investigations were included, usefulness and necessity of the autopsy examinations in the medical practice, etc. A total of 159 students were participated in the study. The questionnaires were given to the students at a single time in the conference hall

and asked to fill that in time of 20 minutes. Responses of all the students were collected and analyzed. Approval of the ethical committee was taken before start of the study and informed consent was obtained from all the participants.

RESULTS:

Out of 159 students, three students didn't mark all questions and were excluded from the study. The study showed positive view of the students regarding the forensic pathology. The knowledge of the necessity of the forensic examination in the sudden or unnatural death was present with 87% of the medical students. Eighty- nine students gave positive response for the utility of using viscera for the histopathological and toxicological analysis for the medico-legal autopsy. For the question of suggestion of the improvement in the autopsy procedure was responded by 57 % of the medical students as necessity of the improvement in the autopsy procedure.

DISCUSSION:

The word autopsy was derived from the Greek word *autopsia*-“to see with one's own eyes”. Autopsy can be classified into medico legal and clinical or academic autopsies. Autopsy is the final step in the identification of a person's illness or cause of death. The medico-legal autopsy plays a significant role in the direction of justice [3]. The autopsy is advantageous in defining, the cause of death, validity of therapeutic modalities, the time of death, potential medico legal issues surrounding death, and providing data on disease and injury [4]. The value of autopsy has also been proven in its elucidation of the clinical quality control, medical auditing and in medical education. It is a necessary examination tool in the medico legal investigation of unnatural and unexplained deaths [5]. The central areas of knowledge that can be learnt effectually by the medical students by attending autopsy include Clinico-pathological correlation, Pathophysiology, Anatomy and Observation skills [6].

Previous literature reveals that the probable value of the autopsy in undergraduate teaching is very large, but its importance has diminished in recent decades, and medical students in some colleges may qualify without ever entering a mortuary [7]. The reasons for this decline in autopsy based teaching include; limited curriculum time, inadequate training of doctors as to the importance of autopsy, competing departmental demands and insufficient hospital autopsies, an improvement in the medical diagnostic technology available; and difficulties in obtaining consent from relatives. Medical students occupy a

privileged position and act as an interface between the laymen and the qualified professional [5-7]. In our study, the knowledge of the necessity of the forensic examination in the sudden or unnatural death was present with 87% of the medical students. This finding was similar to results of the study by Ahmed N *et al.*; [3], in which 90 % of the students had knowledge of the need of the postmortem examination.

In study by Bagga I *et al.*; [5], 57 % of the medical students responded positively for the utility of using viscera for the histopathological and toxicological analysis for the medico-legal autopsy. In the present study, eighty- nine students gave positive response. For the question of suggestion of the improvement in the autopsy procedure was responded by 37 % of the medical students as necessity of the improvement in the autopsy procedure. This result was in contrast to the finding of Ahmed N *et al.*; [3], where 65 % of the medical students responded for the improvement in the autopsy procedure.

CONCLUSION:

In our study, the knowledge and awareness of the medical students was good, but still they should be updated with the recent findings. This can be done by conducting seminars, symposiums, CDE programs or attending forensic conferences.

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