

6M06 (4328)

Third Mission of Higher Education – Social Accountability: Exploring the Attitudes and Awareness of Medical Students in Georgia

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Background

Understanding the concept of social accountability among medical students, as the main stakeholders, remains a global challenge. As future healthcare professionals, medical students should recognize social responsibility and understand their role in society. The study aimed to assess the attitudes and awareness of medical students regarding social accountability and identify the factors influencing their attitudes and potential triggers for proactive engagement.

Summary of Work

Medical students of the USMD program of Tbilisi State Medical University and Ken Walker International University participated in the study. An online survey was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was elaborated according to the literature review and an IFMSA –THE net Students' Toolkit on Social Accountability in Medical Schools. The results were analyzed using SPSS version 16. The verbatims were grouped and analyzed.

Summary of Results

217 students participated (102 – from the TSMU USMD program (response rate = 22.2%) and 115 – from KWIU (response rate = 47%). The mean age was 19.8±2.7 years: 63% female and 37% male. Only 34.1% of the students had heard of social accountability (47% of USMD and 22.6% of KWIU students). The understanding of social responsibility was primarily associated with the “welfare of the community” (79.2% of students), “taking care of societal needs” (67.3%), and “being a responsible citizen” (58.5%). 76% of the students (68.6% –from USMD and 82.6% –from KWIU) thought that students don't contribute to society and should focus on their studies. 88.5% of the students (88.2% from USMD and 88.7% from KWIU) believe that the school has some strategies for social accountability. The verbatim results highlight the necessity to increase practices and opportunities to engage students in the social environment.

Discussion and Conclusions

The students' understanding of the concepts of social accountability appears to be at an average level. It is necessary to find ways to strengthen our school strategies to instill the principles of social responsibility during their training effectively.

Take Home Messages

Medical programs should implement curricular and extracurricular activities to increase the awareness of the concepts and values of social accountability among students.