

3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on

# Psychiatry & Psychosomatic Medicine

December 05-06, 2016 Dubai, UAE

## Medical students attitude toward psychiatry in Umm Al-Qura University: A cross-sectional study

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**Background:** Despite the increasing demand for psychiatry and mental health services, psychiatrist's number are still low and the field of psychiatry is still attracting lower number of medical students.

**Objectives:** To measure the attitude of medical students and interns in Umm Al-Qura University Medical College, Saudi Arabia and to compare it with the attitudes reported from other studies.

**Method:** A cross-sectional study in which attitude toward psychiatry (ATP-30) questionnaire was distributed among randomly chosen interns and undergraduate medical students (6th, 5th and 4th years).

**Results:** A total of 335 participants completed the survey. Among them, only 15.8% considered psychiatry as a career, 57.6 % did not, and 26.6 % were not sure. The participants showed an overall positive attitude with mean of  $98.09 \pm 12.22$  scoring on the ATP-30 questionnaire, with male participants showing more positive attitude than female participants did. The most neutral responses were about how facts in psychiatry are just vague speculations, the value of the undergraduate psychiatric training, and that psychiatry teaching cannot be effective because it's so amorphous. Negative attitude was observed in the areas concerning the choice of psychiatry as career and that psychiatric hospitals are a little more than prisons. Positive attitude toward areas in the validity of psychotherapy observed were, viewing psychiatry as a respected branch of medicine, giving attention to mental illness and the humanity of the mentally ill. Significant differences based on gender were observed in the areas measuring attitude toward psychiatric patients, psychiatric illness, psychiatry and psychiatrists. The prior exposure to psychiatry teaching didn't seem to affect the attitude.

**Conclusion:** Interns and students overall showed neutral to positive ATP. Proper evaluation and subsequent modification to the current medical curriculum, with more clinical exposure and engagement with psychiatrists working in the field may be needed to improve the attitude of interns and students toward psychiatry and mental illness.

### Biography

Alkhiri A is a Medical Intern from Umm Al-Qura University in Makkah, KSA. He has participated in different research activities and is a co-author in a cross sectional study titled: "Medical students' attitude toward psychiatry in Umm Al-Qura University (2016)", under the supervision of Dr. Anas Sarhan, Internal Medicine Department, Umm Al-Qura University, Makkah, KSA.

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