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## Effect of psychiatry course on medical students' attitude towards mental illness and psychiatry at University of Khartoum, 2017

Samar M.A. Attaelfadeel<sup>1</sup>, Hassan M.A. Attaelfadeel<sup>1</sup>, Hajhamed M.A. Elfanoob<sup>2</sup> and Sahar M. Abdelbagi<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>University of Khartoum, Sudan<sup>2</sup>Diaverum Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Statement of the Problem:** Studies found that there is stigma of mental illness among doctors and medical students. This will affect the care and treatment provided by doctors for their patients. The rate of undergraduates pursuing psychiatry as post-graduates has been declining in the course of recent years leading to a decrease in the number of therapists. This creates a treatment gap, especially in developing countries. The purpose of this study is to assess medical students' attitude towards mental illness before and after the psychiatry course, and to determine the percentage of students who would like to become psychiatrists before and after the course.

**Methodology & Theoretical Orientation:** An analytical cross-sectional, institutional-based study was conducted. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to fourth year medical students at the University of Khartoum before and after the psychiatry course. MICA-2 scale was used to assess attitude towards mental illness. Statistical analysis was done using Google Form and SPSS including Independent t-test, Chi-square and analysis of variance test.

**Findings:** 298 students participated (83%) before and 217 students participated both before and after (60.61%). The results showed that there was a significant change in MICA-2 score mean with P value 0.002. The percentage of students interested in psychiatry as a career did not change significantly. Less than 30% considered psychiatry seriously as their future career both before and after the course.

**Conclusion and Significance:** Stigma of mental illness can be reduced and attitude can be improved through medical education. Attitude towards mental illness improved after the psychiatry course but the interest in psychiatry as a future career did not change. Recommendations are to do further research to be a guide for psychiatrists in order to improve the gain from the psychiatry courses in changing students' attitude, and to increase recruitment to psychiatry.

### Recent Publications:

1. ElGhamry R, Alaa El-Din M, Amen G, Mahmoud D and Kandel H (2016) Attitude of medical students toward mentally ill patients: impact of a clinical psychiatric round. *The Egyptian Journal of Neurology, Psychiatry And Neurosurgery* 53(1):6.
2. Lyons Z and Janca A (2015) Impact of a psychiatry clerkship on stigma, attitudes towards psychiatry, and psychiatry as a career choice. *BMC Medical Education* 15(1).
3. Lyons Z (2014) Impact of the psychiatry clerkship on medical student attitudes towards psychiatry and to psychiatry as a career. *Academic Psychiatry* 38(1):35-42.
4. Rodrigo, A., Wijesinghe, C., & Kurupparachchi, K. (2012). Changes in attitudes toward psychiatry with introduction of a new curriculum: experiences of a Sri Lankan medical school. *Sri Lanka Journal Of Psychiatry*, 3(1), 14. doi: 10.4038/slpsyc.v3i1.4454
5. Xavier M and Almeida J (2010) Impact of clerkship in the attitudes toward psychiatry among Portuguese medical students. *BMC Medical Education* 10(1).



**Figure1:** The Effect of Mental Health Stigma

### Biography

Samar M.A. Attaelfadeel is a sixth year medical student at the University of Khartoum. She achieved first place in the Khartoum State Primary Certificate Examination in 2009 and third place in the Sudan Secondary Certificate Examination in 2012. She is considered by the faculty as one of the top ten students in the batch. This is the first research she conducted and published. She is interested in researches about stigma of mental diseases and some physical illnesses.

samar91220@gmail.com