

A study on perceptions and practices about physical activity among undergraduate medical students

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Motivation

Inadequate physical activity is the primary cause for chronic non-communicable diseases. To plan interventions it is necessary to assess physical activity patterns effectively. There are no other published reports exploring the perceptions & physical activity patterns among undergraduate medical students in our country, so this study was conducted.

Methods

A cross sectional study was conducted in Kasturba Medical College, Mangalore, South India from the 12th to 30th April, 2012. A total number of 427 students was arrived at for a 'p'=50%, at 95% confidence interval, 90% power and 10% non-response rates. Non-random sampling was used to select the required number. A semi-structured questionnaire to collect the following components: Perceptions, Barriers & Practices about physical activity was assessed using International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ). Non-random sampling was used. The students were approached in their classrooms after obtaining permission from IEC. Analysis was done by using SPSS ver.11. Comparisons

were made across various levels of physical activity between different age groups and gender.

Results

Three hundred seventy six students participated (non-response rate = 11.94%). Majority of them had moderate physical activity (54.75%). Physical activity was perceived as "Prevention of non-communicable diseases like obesity (90.7%), coronary artery disease (84.3%), hypertension (80.3%)". Knowledge was poor about prevention of diabetes, stroke and osteoporosis. Majority (82.4%) of them perceived health related benefits of physical activity as motivating factors rather than prevention of chronic non-communicable diseases. Most of them (72.3%) have enrolled in life style modification activities like yoga, gym, etc. Sports related activity was the most common type (87%) followed by exercises in gym (31.1%). Most of the students were categorised as "Low" grade walking (84%). Comparison of various grades of physical activity among groups like male v/s female and semester did not yield any statistically significant differences.

Conclusion

Majority of the students have good knowledge about health and disease related preventive effects of physical activity. Most of them practice moderate sports related physical activity.