

Evaluation of Knowledge and Attitude of Undergraduate Medical and Dental Students towards Integrative Medicine and Integrative Dentistry: A Questionnaire Study

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Abstract

Background: Integrative medicine (IM) and Integrative Dentistry (ID) is healing-oriented medicine that takes account of the whole person (body, mind, and spirit), including all aspects of lifestyle. It emphasizes the therapeutic relationship and makes use of all appropriate therapies, both conventional and alternative. It includes Ayurveda, Acupuncture, Chiropractic, Dietary supplements, Reiki, Homeopathy, Massage therapy, Hypnotherapy, etc

Methodology: A self-validated questionnaire study was conducted amongst 600 undergraduate (Indian and Malaysian) dental and medical students to evaluate their knowledge and attitude towards IM and dentistry.

Results and Statistical Analysis: The preclinical Indian and Malaysian students showed similar responses to the IM related questions but for ID questions there were varied responses, although not statistically significant different. When the preclinical and clinical dental students were compared, there were differences in the answers for ID related questions. However there was no statistical significance.

Conclusion: Although the students are aware and would recommend IM to their patients, the knowledge and attitude towards ID still needs to be explored.

Keywords: *Holistic approach, Indian and Malaysian students, Integrative Dentistry, Integrative Medicine, Knowledge and Attitude.*

Introduction

Integrative Medicine (IM) and Integrative Dentistry (ID) is healing-oriented medicine that takes account of the whole person (body, mind, and spirit), including

all aspects of lifestyle. It comprises of all appropriate therapies, both conventional and alternative medicine. It includes Ayurveda, Acupuncture, Chiropractic, Dietary supplements, Reiki, Homeopathy, Massage therapy, Hypnotherapy etc.¹ It is well understood that no single system of therapeutic medicine addresses a disease completely. Allopathic medicine has its own disadvantage in being ineffective in disease prevention and adverse drug reactions. This has led to increase in IM treatment approaches². It adopts a humanistic approach to treatment of a disease emphasizing on therapeutic approaches that match the individual's global perspective.^{3,4} In a study conducted in Israel, It was noted that family physicians play a central role in referring patients to complementary and alternate medicine (CAM). The Practitioners should learn how to communicate and

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collaborate effectively with CAM practitioners for the benefit of their patients⁵. Conventional dental treatment provides only symptomatic management such as restorations, orthodontic corrections, oral prophylaxis, periodontal therapies, extractions followed by prosthetic rehabilitation, without targeting much on the actual etiology causing the problem. This questionnaire study was conducted to evaluate knowledge and attitude of undergraduate medical and dental students towards IM and dentistry.

Methodology

A self validated questionnaire study following the Institution ethics committee approval (IEC 393/2016) was conducted amongst 600 undergraduate (Indian and Malaysian) dental and medical students to evaluate their knowledge and attitude towards IM and dentistry. It was conducted during the regular class hours after obtaining an informed consent from the volunteering students.

Results

The response rate of the study was 98%. There were 17 questions with different scale of answer options. The data obtained was cross tabulated and chi square test was done using SPSS software version 20. There were similar responses to questions related to the knowledge about IM and ID amongst the students (Figure 1,2). However, the responses regarding the attitude and willingness to adapt the same into the regular practice were varied. The results showed that the preclinical Indian and Malaysian students showed similar responses to the IM related questions (Figure 3-6). but for ID questions there were varied responses, although not statistically significant different. When the preclinical and clinical dental students were compared, there were differences in the answers for ID related questions. However, there was no statistical significance.

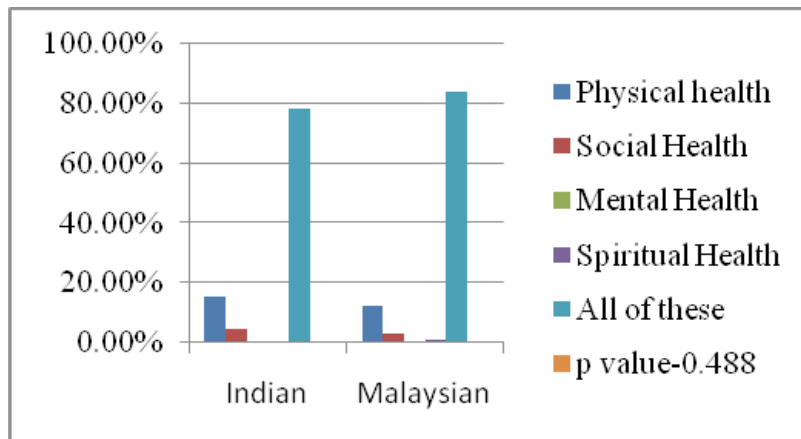


Figure 1: Physician’s role is primarily to promote

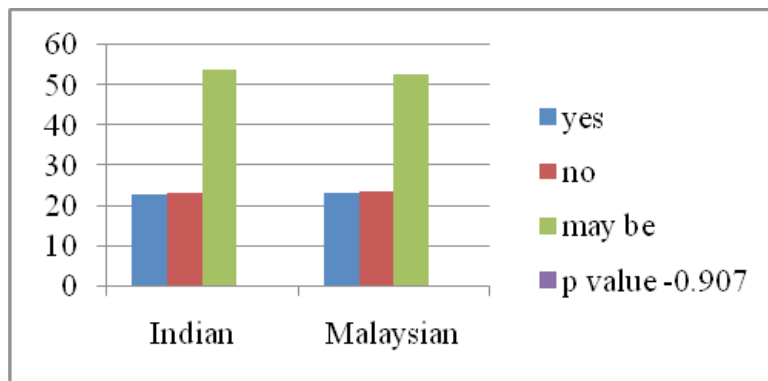


Figure 2 Can Incurable diseases be treated with alternative medicine/therapies

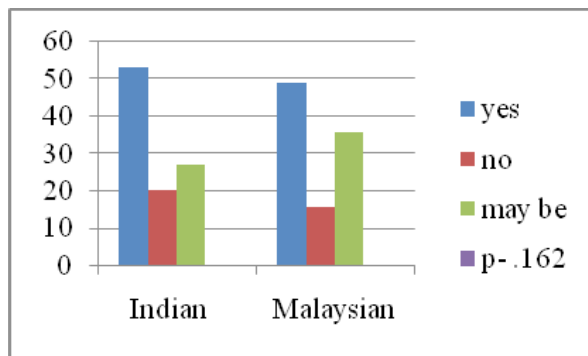


Figure 3 Do you recommend Subtle energy fields for medical therapy

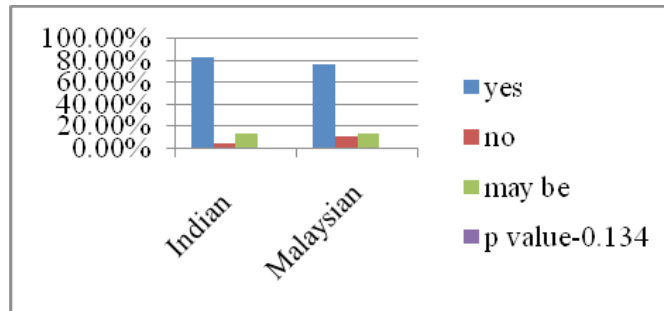


Figure 4 Do you think physicians should have knowledge about both conventional medicine and alternative therapy

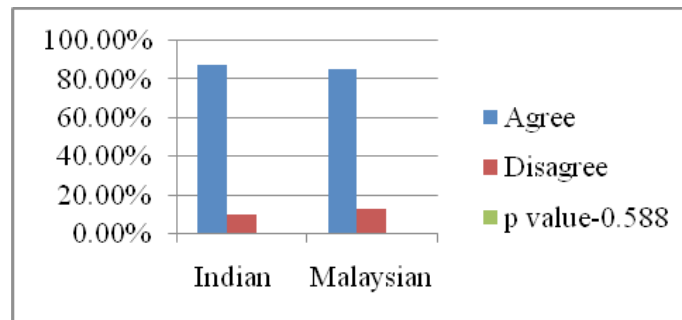


Figure 5 Do you think formation of a Health center that combines all the conventional & Alternative therapies as an integrated approach will promote overall wellbeing of patients

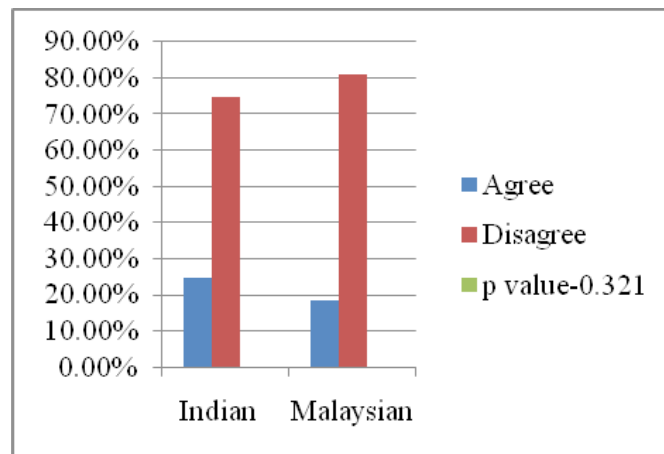


Figure 6 Proper diagnosis and treatment plan plays no role as long as oral lesions such as epulis, gingival inflammation, oral ulcers are healed using homeopathic/ayurvedic medicines

Discussion

In the present study, it is noted that the Indian as well as the Malaysian students are well oriented towards IM and ID. However the attitude towards ID is neutral. Another similar study shows that there is much need to improve the orientation of dental professionals towards IM, although they do not specify ID⁶. The Malaysian dental students have also supported the integration of CAM education in the dental curriculum⁷. In our study, it is seen that the attitude of students towards IM and ID was neutral. Many of them were not sure of using IM and ID into practice. In an Irish study, a satisfactory response rate was seen regarding the attitudes of undergraduate medical students towards the use of CAM, the relevance of IM, and their incorporation into the medical curriculum⁵. It can be attributed to the lesser clinical evidences available on success or failure of ID. Further, in this study there was no difference in the responses of preclinical and clinical students. Although in our curriculum we have not incorporated IM and ID, technological advances and globalization has probably led to a similar responses. However in a previous study it was seen that the junior medical students were more positive toward CAM and its instruction than senior medical students⁸. As the student gets exposed more to allopathic techniques and procedures during the last year of medical school, their attitudes toward CAM decreases.⁹

Majority of the students felt that IM knowledge is necessary to be a well-rounded professional and there should be a health center that combines all the conventional & Alternative therapies as an integrated approach will promote overall wellbeing of patients. This is also supported by many other studies conducted other parts of the world.^{10,11,12}

Conclusion

Although the students are aware and would recommend IM to their patients, the knowledge and attitude towards ID still needs to be explored.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors deny any conflicts of interest.

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