**A study on interns and pre-internship students' awareness level of the patient’s right charter, 2019-2020**

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**Abstract**

Observing patients' rights requires the physicians' awareness of the patient’s right charter contents. Current study was designed in order to determine the Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences internship and pre-internship students' awareness of the patient’s right charter at 2019-2020. In this descriptive- analytic study, 180 internship and pre-internship medical students were included. Data collection tool included a questionnaire.

The mean score of students' awareness was around 17 (maximum score: 29). The awareness of the internship students was significantly higher than pre-internship students. The awareness of the participants had a positive and significant relationship with age. Though the awareness of female students was higher than the male students with no significant difference.

Most of the students were moderately aware of the patient’s right charter, so strategies such as improving the quality of medical ethics courses and workshops or training seminars are suggested for enhancing the awareness.

**Key words:** Internship, Pre-internship, Patient's rights charter.

**Introduction**

Patient's rights are the duties of the medical team to him/her, and are referred to as the total scores and liabilities or the special permissions granted by law to the patient (1,2). In order to make sure of observing the patients' rights, the health and treatment systems of the countries compile a charter known as the patient’s right charter and impart it to the executive sects for implementing it (3). The hospitals and other health service providers must provide the chart or its contents to the patients in order to know their rights and take action to invoke them when needed (3, 4).

Compilation of the patients' rights charter is a starting point in the way of the full-scale attention to meet the patients' rights as well as to provide a correct definition of service providers and service receivers (5). At 2002, the patients' rights charter was compiled for the first time in Iran and was imparted by the health assistance of the health ministry (6,7). The developed charter was adopted by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education in 2009, after that, the ministry issued an administrative order, regarding that, Medical Universities have to work on the application of the charter and hospital accreditation standards have been revised in order to inspect the charter (8).

It seems that the act of health ministry in preparation and notification of the patient’s right charter to medical centers was an effective step in putting forward the subject of patient's rights and observing it, but there is considerable distance between its compilation and realization, so it is necessary to take complimentary measures for realize it (9). The implementation of this charter requires that the students of professional health fields have enough information about the existence and contents of the charter as well as a positive consideration of the importance of it (10). Thus, the goal of current study is to evaluate Ahvaz Jundishapur University of medical sciences awareness rate of the patient’s right charter. It is obvious that reporting this rate can be effective in the authorities programming to promote it, increasing the quality and quantity of the arranged services to the patients and increasing patients' satisfaction.

**Methods**

In the descriptive- analytic and cross sectional research, the statistical population comprised of 180 intern and pre-intern medical students of Ahvaz Jundishapur University of medical sciences at 2019-2020. To collect the required data, a 3 part questionnaire including 36 question was used. The questionnaire included 7 questions about demographic information (age, gender, educational grade, and the total awareness of the patient’s right charter and medical morals), 29 four- choice questions about the patient’s right charter and 6 survey questions as Yes or No. For rating the questionnaire, 1 score was given to each correct answer, and no score was given to the incorrect answer (minimum score: 0, maximum score: 29). The students who gained between 0 to 33% of total score (score: 0-9), between 34 to 66% (score: 20-29) and higher than 66% (score: 20-29) were considered to have weak, moderate, and good awareness of the patient’s right charter, respectively. The validity and stability of questionnaire of the patient’s right charter have been approved already by Zarei and Arab (11), and Ranjbar et.al. (12) (r=0.83). In order to perform the statistical analyses SPSS software version 22 was used. Independent statistical T-test, Mann Whitney non- parametric test and ANOVA (or Kruskal- Wallis non- parametric test) were used to correlate the quantitative variables and K-score test (or Fisher’s exact test) to compare the qualitative variables. The significance of tests was considered at 0.05 or less.

The project was approved by the ethics committee of Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences by No. IR.AJUMS.REC.1397.402.

**Results**

In the current cross-sectional study, 180 intern and pre-order intern medical students with a mean age of 25.52 0.14 were included in the study. 58 (32.2%) were male and 122 (67.8%) were female. 116 (65.2%) were interns and 62 (34.8%) were pre-intern students. The students mean awareness score was 17.16 0.23 with minimum of 9 and maximum of 23. 2 students (1.1%) had weak awareness, 140 students (77.8%) had moderate awareness, and 38 students (21.1%) had good awareness of the patients' rights charter. The Pearson correlation coefficient test showed that the students awareness has a significant relation with age (p=0.007, r=0.202). As it is shown in table 1, the students mean awareness had no significant difference according to the age, but had a significant difference according to the educational grades and the interns were more aware than pre-interns (p <0.05).

Table. 1. The participants' average awareness according to gender and the educational grades

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Mean SD** | | **Minimum** | **Maximum** | **Variable** | | |
|  | 16.65±0.51 | 9 | 23 | Male | | gender |
|  | 17.40±0.24 | 11 | 23 | Female | |
|  | 17.16±0.23 | 9 | 23 | total | |
| p value 0.345 | | | | | | |
|  | 17.62±0.28 | 10 | 23 | internship | educational level | |
|  | 16.25±0.39 | 9 | 21 | pre-internship |
| p value 0/005 | | | | |

According to the results of table 2, the highest scores of the awareness were related to the patients' rights of the conscious consent. Of the 5 fields of the questionnaire, only the right of conscious consent had a positive and significant relation to age (p=0/000, r=290). The mean score of questionnaire had not a significant difference in two genders, but the field of the right of awareness of the treatment process which was significantly higher (p <0.05). The mean score of the right of conscious consent and awareness of the treatment process were also significantly different in the interns and pre- interns and was significantly lower in the pre- interns (p <0.05) (table 2).

The frequencies of survey questions are shown in table 3.

The students suggestions for compensating the chart information voids were: instructing the patients' rights charter by holding training workshops, installing posters and brochures, training clips in classroom format (number: 17), starting to training the patients' rights charter from psychopathology (number: 1), adherence of personnel and authorities to the patients' rights charter (number: 2), improving medical ethics classes quality by providing cards and real examples (number: 1), and putting forward the questions related to the patients' rights charter in pre-intern course tests (number: 1).

Table 2. The participants' mean awareness scores of the patients' rights charter fields according to gender and the educational grades

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The right of access to treatment services (score 0-4)** | | **The right of conscious consent (score 0-11)** | **The right of awareness of treatment process (score 0-5)** | **The right of patients personal freedom**  **(score 0-4)** | **The right of information Privacy (score 0-5)** | **variable** | |
| 2.51 0.05 | | 6.7 0.12 | 2.6 0.07 | 2.30 0.06 | 2.93 0.07 | Total students | |
| 2.51 0.11 |  | 6.72 0.23 | 2.48 0.13 | 2.17 0.13 | 2.75 0.13 | male | gender |
| 2.50 0.06 |  | 6.71 0.15 | 2.76 0.09 | 2.36 0.07 | 3.03 0.09 | female |
| 0.620 | | 0.906 | 0.048 | 0.540 | 0.173 | p value | |
| 2.46 0.07 |  | 7.08 0.15 | 2.79 0.10 | 2.27 0.09 | 3.0 0.89 | internship | educational level |
| 2.58 0.09 |  | 6.03 0.18 | 2.45 0.12 | 2.35 0.10 | 2.83 0.13 | Pre-internship |
| 0.221 | | 0.000 | 0.029 | 0.979 | 0.721 | p value | |

Table 3. The frequencies of survey questions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Frequency (%)** | **Answer** | **Question** |
| 58 (32.2) | yes | You have been informed of the patient's rights charter before internship course or in its beginning? |
| 122 (67.8) | no |
| 38 (21.1) | professor | If your answer is yes, what have been your information sources? |
| 8 (4.4) | books |
| 52 (28.9) | other |
| 108 (60) | Medical ethics | Was the medical ethics or forensic medicine course contents affective in enhancement of your awareness of the patients' rights? |
| 38 (21.1) | Forensic medicine |
| 30 (16.7) | no |
| 166(92.3) | yes | Do you think the students' awareness of the patients' rights is necessary in the medical internship course? |
| 12 (6.7) | no |
| 30 (16.7) | yes | Do you think the medical internship students' information of the patients' rights are sufficient? |
| 40 (22.3) | no |
| 56 (31.1) | yes | Are the patients' rights are observed in the hospital you are passing your internship course? |
| 122(67.8) | no |
| 166(92.2) | yes | Do you think the students' awareness of the patients' rights is necessary in the medical pre-internship course? |
| 14 (7.8) | no |
| 38 (21.1) | yes | Do you think the medical pre-internship students' information of the patients' rights are sufficient? |
| 138(76.7) | no |
| 60 (33.3) | yes | Are the patients' rights are observed in the hospital you are passing your pre-internship course? |
| 114(63.3) | no |

**Discussion**

In the current cross sectional study, we evaluated the awareness of clinical medical students about the patient's rights charter and we concluded that this awareness for internship and pre-internship students of Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences was 17.16 ± 0.23 of maximum 29, which shows that the students had moderate awareness. Generally 1.1% of the students had weak awareness, 77.8% had moderate awareness, and 21.1% had good awareness. Also, the highest awareness rate was for the conscious consent filed.

Khaledi et al. analysed perspectives of patients about patients’ rights in the educational hospitals of Kurdistan, Iran. They emphasis that patients believed that for observing their rights, they need to be appreciated and attempted standard healthcare services (13).

In the study of Samadbeik et al. (2014) on Lorestsn University of medical sciences paramedical school, 1.45% of the students had weak awareness, 81.16% had moderate awareness, and 17.39% had good awareness of the patient's rights charter. The highest awareness rate was for the health services field (14). In the study of Azimi and colleagues (2011) on the midwifery students, medical interns and professional assistances of obstetrics wards at Tehran, the awareness score was gained 8.53 of 15 which was moderate. 7.7% of the students had weak awareness, 79.5% of them had moderate awareness, and 12.8% of them had good awareness (9). In the study of Ranjbar et.al (2010) on medical interns of Yazd hospitals, 35.6% of them had weak awareness, 27% had moderate awareness, and 36.7% of them had good awareness. The highest rate of awareness was for the personal freedom and the lowest was for the access right to health services (12). In the study of Bathaei et.al (2010) on Qom medical sciences students (medicine, nursery, operation room and anesthesia), 58/8% of the students had weak and moderate awareness of the patient's rights charter. The highest rate of awareness was for the patient's right to know the treatment methods and the lowest was for the patient's right to know the discharging time (10). In the study of Ghorbani and his colleagues (2010) on Ahvaz Jundishapur University of medical sciences interns and assistances, 14.45% of doctors had no information about the patient's rights charter contents, but 61.7% of them were fully informed about it (15). The studies conducted by Dicinskiene et.al at Lithuania (2007) (16) and by Woogara et.al at NHS hospitals of UK (2005) (17) also shown that the physicians, nurses and patients had poor awareness of the patient's rights charter.

Considering the current research results and the students' awareness of the medical ethical rules, the necessity of revising medical students' ethical curriculum and making it more and more applicable is felt, as the awareness is moderate and we should pay attention to enhancing and approaching to the desirable levels. In the current study, some of the students pointed out to the necessity of improving the quality and quantity of the education through holding training workshops, installing posters and brochures, training clips in classroom format.

In current study, most of the students (92.2% of interns and pre- interns) had a positive attitude towards the patients' rights charter and considered the awareness of that in the internship and pre- internship courses necessary. Also, 82.2% of the interns and 76.7% of the pre- interns stated that they had not enough information about the patients' rights. 67.8% of the students noted that they have not been aware of the patient's rights charter at the beginning or before their internship courses, indicating the deficit of education related to the patients' rights. So, it is suggested that the teaching of medical ethics is provided in physiopathology or maximum in the first semester of internship. In this research, 21.1% of the students have noted to professors as their information source, 4.4% of them have noted to books and 28.9% to the other sources. It seems that the deficiency of books and journals as well as the leakage of study interest on the patients' rights could be effective factors in the students not knowing the patients' rights.

In the current study, the females had more awareness of the patient's rights charter than males, although a significant difference was not observed. The internship students had more awareness than the pre- internship students in average, which could be due to their higher experience. Besides, the participants' awareness had a significant positive relationship with age, which may be due to increasing the experience and knowledge about the patients' rights during their study period.

In the study of Samadbeik and colleagues (2014) on paramedical college students there was a significant relation between sex and the awareness of the patient's rights and the females were more aware than males (14), which in agreement with our study. In the study of Ranjbar et.al (2009) on the medical interns, a significant relationship was reported between the awareness and the gender and educational levels (12).

**Conclusions**

Based on the results, the mean awareness of internship and pre-internship students of Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences of the patient's rights charter was17.16 ± 0.23 which is moderate. Most of the students had moderate awareness of the patient's rights charter, so strategies such as workshops or training seminars, starting medical ethics course from physiopathology level, conditioning the improvement of ethical questions in the pre-internship exams, improving the quality of medical ethics courses and continuous articulating the medical ethics messages in the hospitals and dormitories through public stands and brochures are suggested for enhancing the awareness.

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**Conflict of Interests**

All authors declare that they have no significant competing interests that might have influenced the performance of the work or presentation of the article.

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