Dear Editors

We appreciate the opportunity to submit our manuscript entitled "Absence of moral competence development in medical students: A cross-sectional study in two countries". The objective of this paper is to examine the development of moral competence and attitudes among medical students in two post-socialist and post-war countries in transition (at all four medical schools in Croatia and one medical school in Bosnia and Herzegovina). The cross-sectional study showed that, regardless of country and medical school,  moral competence of medical students did not increase across study years that was expected to arise with maturation and involvement in university studies.

The study adds to the literature on moral competence development of medical students and follows up our earlier papers on academic dishonesty. It is the proceeding of our long-standing academic efforts to sensitize and alert the academic community and the society in general on these vital problems of medical education. The observed stagnation in moral competence among medical students calls for deep reflection by teachers and university administrators to reevaluate the curriculum and implement changes in their teaching as well as new effective methods of fostering moral competence. The first step in starting a change in a morally eroded society is to make these problems as public as possible (and this is not so easy).

The manuscript has not been previously published and is not under consideration in the same or substantially similar form in any other journal. All those listed as authors are qualified for authorship. To the author’s knowledge, no conflict of interest, financial or other, exists. Each author has participated and contributed sufficiently to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content.

As per ICJME guidelines, authorship credit has been based on the following criteria (1) substantial contributions to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; and (2) drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and (3) final approval of the version to be published.

We prepared the manuscript according to the journal's Submission Guidlines and believe it is in the scope of your journal. We hope that you will consider our manuscript for the publication in the Indian Journal of Medical Ethics and await your response and the comments of reviewers.

Yours sincerely,

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Absence of moral competence development in medical students: A cross-sectional study in two countries

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**Competing interests:** None.

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