

Subtheme 3: Education, the pandemic, and beyond

OP30

Changes in academic performance of 4th year undergraduates, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna during COVID-19 and associated factors

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Background and Objective: COVID-19 is a global health problem. As a consequence, the education system has shifted from face-to-face learning to online learning, affecting academic performance in various ways. This study aimed to estimate the difference in academic performance before and during COVID-19 and to describe the association of selected factors with academic performance among 4th year undergraduates of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna.

Methods: An institution-based cross-sectional study was conducted among medical undergraduates of the University of Jaffna. The data were collected by self-administered questionnaires and analysed by the statistical software SPSS (v25) using t-test and chi-square test.

Results: In total, 139 undergraduates participated with a response rate of 93.9% (139/148). The total number of males was 64 (46%). There were significant differences in the academic performance before and during COVID-19 in microbiology ($p=0.047$), parasitology ($p=0.016$), and pharmacology ($p=0.09$). Participants showed improved performance in parasitology whereas performance fell in microbiology and pharmacology during COVID-19. There were no significant differences in academic performance in pathology ($p=0.113$). With respect to psychological aspects, 23.7% ($n=33$) experienced stress, 36.0% ($n=50$) anxiety, and 41.0% ($n=57$) depression during COVID-19, according to DASS-21. The majority used smartphones ($n=105$, 75.5%) and mobile broadband ($n=120$, 86.3%) for e-learning. Overall, 55.4% ($n=77$) were moderately satisfied with e-learning. There was no significant association between family income and hours spent on self-study ($p=0.970$) or e-learning ($p=0.308$).

Conclusions: Academic performance improved in parasitology, reduced in microbiology and pharmacology, and did not change significantly in pathology during COVID-19. There was no significant association between family income and hours spent in self-study and e-learning. In Sri Lanka, there is a need for more research on COVID-19 and academic performance.

Keywords: COVID-19, Academic performance, Medical undergraduates