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A comparative study of attendances of ATKT students with the attendances of regular students

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ABSTRACT

Background: ATKT students attend community medicine lectures irregularly during their II MBBS university examinations and during other periods also. This study attempts to explore whether the attendances of ATKT students varied significantly, statistically from the attendances of regular students.

Methods: This study was conducted at ACPM Medical College, Dhule, Maharashtra between 1 April 2016 to 15 October 2016. The author took the attendances of students carefully and meticulously for all lectures. He took the attendance of lectures of other faculties also with due respect and permission.

Results: There were total 93 students in which 63 students were regular and 30 students were ATKT. During the study period a total of 83 lectures were conducted. Mean attendance of regular students was 58.6 while the same (mean attendance) of ATKT students was 24.4. The author applied 'standard error of difference between two proportions' test to compare the two groups. The attendance in % for regular students was 70.6% and the same for ATKT students was 29.4%. The difference in attendances between the two groups was statistically significant with Z value at 4.07

Conclusions: The attendance of ATKT students was abysmally poor. The difference of attendances of ATKT students and Regular students was statistically highly significant.

Keywords: ATKT students, Regular students

INTRODUCTION

During Community Medicine internal assessment examinations, I came across many unfamiliar students. Mostly, the cause of unfamiliarity was irregularity of the students due to ATKT (allowed to keep term) system at Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS). These students attend teaching programmes, irregularly, particularly during and around their II MBBS MUHS examinations and also during other times. Their primary aim is to pass the II MBBS and in this process, they give less importance to III MBBS (part I) subjects' lectures, practicals and clinical postings. The situations is also

worsened by corrupt practices at various medical colleges where there is tendency to manipulate (increase) the attendances of students with poor attendances. There are no additional teaching programmes for their missed lectures, clinical postings or practical's. Due to this, for majority of times, they are not appropriately trained, thereby jeopardizing the MCI (medical council, India) goal of producing a competent Indian Medical Graduate (IMG). Hence I decided to verify the validity of my perception. For community medicine, ATKT students are those students who fail in 1 to 4 subjects in II MBBS and allowed to keep term.

METHODS

Permission was sought from the ethical committee of the college.

Study design

Type of study: Prospective/double blind (mostly, though at the conclusion of study the identity of the atkt students became evident)/cohort study

Cohort group: ATKT students

Control group: Regular students

Variable under study: Attendance at lectures

Study place and period: Attendance of 6th and 7th semester MBBS students attending teaching programmes of Community Medicine, from 1/4/2016 to 15/10/2016 at ACPM Medical College, Dhule.

At ACPM Medical College, during I and II Semesters, sufficient number of hours was not allotted to community medicine subject due to late admissions and compulsion of syllabus completion of I MBBS examination subjects (Anatomy, Physiology & Biochemistry).² 30 hours of first MBBS were adjusted in 6th and 7th semesters. Hence though, as per MUHS syllabus there are 50 lectures in 6th and 7th semesters, we conducted 83 lectures.³

Selection criteria

Inclusion criteria

- (1) ATKT students: (a) students who failed II MBBS in 1-4 subjects and allowed to keep term in winter 2015.
- (2) Regular students: (a) students who passed II MBBS examinations in winter 2015.

Exclusion criteria

Exclusion criteria were other previous batch (earlier to winter 2015 examination) ATKT students who continued failing II MBBS examinations at various attempts.

Procedure

Utmost care was taken to maintain the accuracy of data. Proxy attendances were abolished. The author took the attendances himself even for other faculty lectures (with due respect and permission). In ACPM medical college, students need to sign on the attendance sheet for every lecture/practical or clinical posting. Many teachers give the attendance sheet to the students while conducting the sessions. Many students make proxy signatures. Many teachers don't cross-check the attendance sheet or sometimes they don't have time to cross-check it due to

overshooting of their lecture time. All these hurdles were faced and accuracy of the records was maintained.

Statistical analysis

It was done by both methods, descriptive as well as inferential. For comparison, 'standard error of difference between two proportions test' was applied.

RESULTS

There were total 93 students consisting of 63 Regular students and 30 ATKT students. Total number of conducted lectures was 83.

Mean lecture attendance of ATKT students was 24.4.Mean lecture attendance of regular students 58.6. Thus the attendances of ATKT students were low as compared to regular students.

Coefficient of variation (standard deviation x 100/mean) indicates that spread is more erratic in ATKT students while in Regular students it is relatively more consistent. These findings are summarized below in Table 1.

Table 1: Students attendance summary.

	Regular students	ATKT students
Number of students	63	30
Sum of attendances	3690	731
Mean attendance	58.6	24.4
Standard Deviation	16.5	14.9
Co-efficient of variation	28.2	61.1

Table 2: Lecture attendances in percentage.

	Regular students	ATKT students
Number of students	63	30
Mean attendance	58.6	24.4
Total lectures	83	83
Attendance %	70.6	29.4

The above Table 2 shows that the number of Regular students was 63 and the number of ATKT students was 30. The attendances in percentage for Regular students was 70.6% and the same for ATKT students was 29.4%. The total number of conducted lectures was 83. It is clear that attendances of ATKT students was far from satisfactory. Even the attendance of regular students was below the MUHS (Maharashtra University of Health Sciences) norm of minimum 75% for lectures.

The Figure 1 depicts attendances of ATKT students and regular students in numbers. The red columns indicate the total number of lectures conducted. It was 83. The blue columns indicate the mean attendances of regular

students and ATKT students. The mean attendance of regular students was 58.6 and that for ATKT students was 24.4. It is clear that attendance of ATKT students was poor.

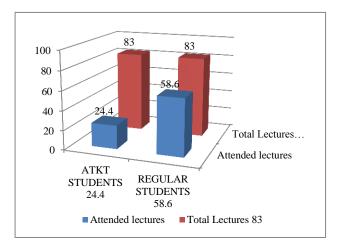


Figure 1: Attendances of regular and ATKT students in numbers.

DISCUSSION

I searched internet for the references of studies on ATKT students. I couldn't find any, except the following reference of Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, the ATKT system has been criticized, mainly by teachers. "Firstly, it would bring down the quality of education in our school and colleges. Secondly, the students would not have any motivation to study." In my study, I found the attendance of ATKT students was abysmally poor (29.4%) during the study period. All students attributed the cause of absence to the preparation and examination of II MBBS Examination. The college did not have plan for the teaching of the missed lectures, practicals or clinical postings because it is expected that students should attend the classes while preparing for II MBBS examinations. However, they preferred to avoid it.

While discussing with the students, it was also brought to notice that, the students, who fail during main examination of I MBBS, appear for supplementary examination after 1 month. It takes further 1 month for the results to be declared. Those who pass the supplementary examination almost lose more than 2 months of 3rd semester lecture, practicals and clinical postings. The lost portion of curriculum during this period is not taught to the students.

The relationship of attendance and academic performance is usually directly proportional with few exceptions. ⁵⁻⁹ DhalIwal found in his study that higher attendance was associated with better marks (p<0.0001). Khan et al reported that the results of the term test showed that the percentage of failure in students with less than 75%, attendance was significantly higher when compared to the students with equal or more than 75% attendance. ⁶ Seema et al found that there is a statistically significant

association between attendance and test scores ($p \le 0.001$). There is a positive correlation between attendance and test scores (r = 0.05).

Devadoss et al also found strong empirical evidence of positive influence of class attendance on student performance. Clair found (empirical) the relationship between class attendance and academic achievement to be equivocal. Thus it is evident that poor attendance of ATKT students due to various reasons (mostly II MBBS examination) will certainly decrease their academic performance.

Recommendations

Hence, based upon my above study and incidental findings, I suggest: 1. Similar studies at other medical colleges (and for more duration also) to get a better understanding of attendances of ATKT students. 2. ATKT students should be given a preparatory leave and examination leave for II MBBS examination. For the lost portion of teaching during this period, the respective departments should arrange additional lectures, practicals and clinical postings. 3. To arrange additional lectures, practicals and clinical postings for the lost portion of curriculum for the supplementary batch during 3rd semester (Pathology, Microbiology, Forensic Medicine, Pharmacology and Community Medicine). 4. Study also needed to explore the other causes of absenteeism like poor teaching, poor understanding by students due to language and other barriers, lack of sincereness in students, corrupt practices at medical colleges (increasing the attendances of students to increase the numbers students to qualify for university examinations). 5. Best option would be to do away with the ATKT system and to conduct examination every 6 months.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the attendance of ATKT students was abysmally poor as compared to the attendances of regular students. Even the attendance of regular students was below the MUHS minimum norm. The difference of attendances of ATKT students and Regular students was statistically significant. All students attributed the university examination for the cause of absenteeism.

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Ethical approval: The study was approved by the

Institutional Ethics Committee

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