

MEDICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF STUDENTS' HEALTH STATUS

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Abstract:

A comparative assessment of medical college students' health status was conducted throughout their educational journey, focusing on general and primary morbidity rates. Student awareness of healthy lifestyle practices was examined, identifying subjective health-related factors and lifestyle characteristics influenced by the academic program and age of respondents. Key physical development indicators, including height, weight, and body mass index (BMI), were determined. Findings showed a 36% increase in general morbidity and a 69% increase in primary morbidity, with general morbidity levels in 2022 surpassing primary morbidity by 1.7 times, indicating rising chronic pathologies among students. Over 70% of students have chronic conditions, and unhealthy lifestyle habits, such as smoking, frequent alcohol consumption, physical inactivity, and poor diet, are prevalent. An overweight issue was identified in third-year students, alongside weight loss and reduced height in junior-year students.

Keywords: *health, morbidity, lifestyle, risk factors, students, nutrition, body mass index.*

Introduction

Introduction

Students represent a demographic at risk for multiple health factors, such as an increasing volume of information, high levels of mental and emotional stress during exams, and specific lifestyle patterns. Their unique social status and academic environment make students particularly vulnerable to

chronic diseases. Key criteria for evaluating student health include morbidity, lifestyle, and quality of life. A comprehensive analysis of morbidity patterns, based on disease incidence and preventive exam results, provides an objective view of student health.

Study Objective

To conduct a comparative assessment of medical college students' health throughout the learning process and identify factors shaping student health.

Materials and Methods

The study assessed morbidity among medical college students by analyzing records of illnesses reported to the student health clinic. Primary data was collected from outpatient records, and morbidity analysis was based on the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Health-Related Problems (ICD-10, WHO, 1995). Student awareness of healthy living, subjective health influences, and lifestyle factors associated with academic programs and age were evaluated through a specially designed questionnaire addressing various aspects of respondents' lives. Particular emphasis was placed on diet, including frequency and types of foods consumed.

The study included 390 students from first and third years, for whom key physical development indicators (height, weight, and BMI) were recorded.

Results and Discussion

The general morbidity rate among students showed an upward trend. Between 2021 and 2022, morbidity increased by 36%, reaching 1313.0 cases per 1000 students in 2022, compared to 965.0 in 2021. Primary morbidity rose by 69% in the same period, reflecting a rapid increase in newly identified health issues, which highlights a deterioration in student health.

Over the past three years, of the 19 disease categories examined, 13 showed a rise in primary morbidity. The greatest increases were in diseases affecting the musculoskeletal system (up 7 times), nervous system (28% increase), endocrine system (98% increase), and eye and accessory structures (83.4% increase). Among nervous system diseases, vegetative-vascular dystonia (VSD) was prevalent, with an incidence of 19.1 per 1000 population and a 2.5-fold increase among adolescents. VSD was present in 70% of students with vascular disorders, peaking among those aged 15-19, and accompanied by low physical fitness.

Eye-related conditions were dominated by accommodation spasms and refractive errors such as myopia and astigmatism. These issues, influenced by students' lifestyle, highlight the need for health-promoting visual interventions to combat fatigue-related issues in students.

Survey results revealed that 64% of first-year and 70% of third-year students rated their health as 'good,' while 33% and 26% described it as 'satisfactory.' Approximately 35.2% of third-year students felt their health had remained unchanged during their studies, while 62.5% reported a decline, and only 2.3% noticed improvements.

Around half (47.6%) of students reported chronic illnesses but exhibited low medical activity, with most doctor visits driven by administrative needs rather than health concerns. Sedentary behavior was common: 47.2% of first-year and 71.3% of third-year students spent free time on screens or reading, with only a minority regularly participating in sports (22.4% and 16.2% for first and third years, respectively).

In terms of diet, 58% of students understood "healthy eating" as including more vegetables and fruits and following food hygiene and dietary habits. However, only a small fraction consumed fresh fruits daily, and many opted for quick snacks instead of regular meals. Fresh fruit consumption was low, with only 18% consuming them daily and 6% rarely or never eating them.

Physical assessments showed 1.2% of first-year boys and 6.3% of girls were overweight, while 21.7% of boys and 22.4% of girls were underweight. Among third-year students, 10.6% of boys and 36.7% of girls were overweight, with 5.1% of them classified as obese (grades 1 and 2). Caloric intake was positively correlated with BMI ($r=0.43$, $p<0.05$), and overweight students consumed higher dietary fats than their peers.

Conclusion

Between 2021 and 2022, there was a 36% rise in general morbidity and a 69% increase in primary morbidity, indicating a decline in student health. The largest morbidity increases were observed in diseases of the musculoskeletal, nervous, eye, endocrine systems, as well as in eating and metabolic disorders. General morbidity in 2022 (1313.1 cases) was 1.7 times higher than primary morbidity (742.8 cases), underscoring the prevalence of chronic conditions in students.

Despite these health challenges, most students do not maintain healthy lifestyle habits, as seen in high rates of smoking, frequent alcohol use, sedentary behavior, and poor diets. Overweight is common in third-year students, while first-year students show signs of underweight and shorter stature.

A thorough lifestyle and health assessment among students is critical to developing tailored therapeutic and preventive measures. This approach supports a targeted strategy for promoting healthy living habits among students.

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