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STRESS IN FIRST-YEAR EGYPTIAN AND SAUDI FEMALE MEDICAL STUDENTS: A CROSS CULTURAL COMPARISON

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**Introduction:** College students, especially freshmen, are particularly prone to stress due to the transitional nature of college life . However most of studies in this context were conducted in Western Europe and North America with only few recent studies conducted in the Arab world . This study sought to determine whether there was a difference in perceived stress levels of female medical students at Mansoura University, Egypt, and King Faisal University, Saudi Arabia.

**Methods:** The sample consisted of first year female medical students. The self-reported questionnaire covered four categories, including 13 items, of sources of stress (stressors). Perceived stress scale and Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale were used to measure stress, anxiety and depression.

**Results:** There is no significant difference between the two groups regarding number of stressors. However, Saudi students were more likely to cite emotional problems, excessive workload and fear of future. The most common items in Egyptian students were financial and environmental problems. Prevalence of stress and clinical anxiety was higher in the Saudi sample. Logistic regression analyses of independent predictors of high level of stress among both groups combined were Saudi nationality, larger family size, clinical depression and clinical anxiety.

**Conclusions:** Perceived stress and anxiety are frequent among Saudi students. This information could be useful in designing preventive mental health programs that should be an integral part of the routine clinical facilities caring for medical students to help them to cope with the increasing demands of medical education.