

P-904 - ATTITUDES TOWARD PSYCHIATRY AMONG PORTUGUESE MEDICAL STUDENTS: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY

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Introduction: Given the shortage of human resources and the launching of a new Mental Health Plan, recruitment of psychiatrists is currently a major concern in Portugal, as well as in several other countries.

Medical students' attitude toward psychiatry has been pointed as a predictor of recruitment. Several studies reported the positive effect a clerkship has on the student's attitude towards psychiatry. This effect is particularly visible in clerkships that promote students to participate in the direct delivery of care.

Objectives: To evaluate the medical students' perception of psychiatry, and the impact on their intention to pursue psychiatry as a future specialty.

Methods: Two self-report questionnaires (Balon,1999) were administered to all 6th year students in a medical school in Lisbon, before and after a 4-weeks full-time psychiatric clerkship.

Results: 153 students were assessed. After the clerkship, there was a significant improvement regarding the overall merits of psychiatry, efficacy, role definition and functioning of psychiatrists, use of legal powers to hospitalize patients and specific medical school factors. There was also a significant increase of students decided or considering the possibility to take a residency in psychiatry.

However, perceptions of low prestige and negative pressure from family and peers regarding a future choice of psychiatry remained unchanged in about one-third of the students.

Conclusions: Clerkship had a favorable overall impact on the student attitude towards psychiatry, as well as in the number of students considering a future career in psychiatry. Attitudes toward psychiatry seems a promising outcome indicator of the clerkship's quality.