

SOCIAL PHOBIA AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS

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Background and objectives: Mental distress among medical students is often reported. Social phobia is a highly prevalent yet often overlooked psychiatric disorder that can cause severe disability but fortunately has shown responsiveness to specific pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy. The aim of this work was to study the prevalence of social phobia problem and potential risk factors that may be associated with social anxiety among medical students.

Methods: The present study was designed to identify the manifestations and correlates of social phobia among medical college students. The sample for this investigation consists of 321 (170 female and 151 male) students aged 19-26 years. For detection of social phobia among the studied sample, we used Social phobia inventory which is a self rating scale that capture the spectrum of fear, avoidance and physiological symptoms. It demonstrates good test-retest reliability, internal consistency, convergent and divergent validity.

Results: The sample consisted of participants from all medical stages (this was a proportionate representative sample from each classes), 56% were from higher income groups, nearly 45% had their residence in hostel, 21.5% of the students had a SPIN score of 19 and more, mean social phobia was present in almost 22% of the population. There was no statistically significant difference in prevalence of social phobia with respect to gender, family income or type of residence.

Conclusion: Social phobia has a high prevalence and marked impact on life, early identification and adequate treatment by college counseling centers will successfully help in reducing the burden of this common condition.