PP 51: Barriers to pre-clinical distance learning during the covid-19 pandemic and their impact on academic motivation

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Introduction: With transition to e-learning; despite many advantages of it, no studies have focused on obstacles accounting for losing academic interest, especially in freshman years of Medicine.

Objectives: To explore unseen barriers to online medical education and their influence on academic motivation.

Methods: An online survey was conducted among pre-clinical medical students of Sri Lankan state universities. Responses collected from 250 volunteers were descriptively analysed.

Results: All students had some kind of smart device with internet access. Though self-studying time had increased overall, the percentage of students who spent less than 2 hours per day on it had increased from 12% to 16%. Yet time spent entertaining in social media had significantly escalated. When rated on a five-point scale, 98.8% of the students found poor time management and lack of self-discipline as a barrier. Addiction to Internet/ gaming with poor academic concentration, physical interferences (e.g. noise, violence and limited space) and excess responsibilities at home were other frequent problems faced by the respondents. 63.3% had joined online classes regularly while paying attention but the other proportion could not pay attention as in physical sessions. Work overload, lack of peer learning, distractions from family, and lack of physical interaction with teachers had notably influenced losing academic motivation. About 39% firmly believed that distance learning had lowered their academic performance than during the pre-pandemic period.

Conclusions: Absence of a conducive learning environment discouraged students to a great extent. Hence, successful implementation of e-learning for medicine requires a more engaging and in-depth approach.

Keywords: pre-clinical, distance learning, e-learning, medical students, barriers