

Effects of introducing "code of conduct for cadavers" on medical students' attitudes

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Background:

Human cadaver specimen has long been an important resource for teaching anatomy to freshman medical students, and as their first exposure to the human body, it can be considered a precious educational opportunity to encourage them to treat the human body with dignity and foster their professional behaviors. Literature, art, and film have been commonly used to teach elements of professionalism, especially empathy and respect that requires an ability to imagine viewpoints of others. In this study, we assessed first-year medical students' attitude towards cadaver dissection before and after an educational intervention aimed to facilitate their adaption to participate in dissection room and familiarity with related codes of conduct.

Methods and Materials:

A single group with pre-test and post-test design was conducted at the Tehran University of Medical Sciences. Students' attitude was assessed using a valid researcher-made questionnaire. Items were scored on a five-item Likert scale ranging from completely agree =5 to completely disagree=1. The educational program included showing of a film about cadaver donation followed by a discussion of principles of professionalism in dissection room and ethical codes regarding cadaver dissection by a panel of experts. All first-year medical students (N=194) were included in this study and students had been previously exposed to cadavers before this study.

Results:

Out of 194 students participating in the program, 146 students were surveyed (response rate of 75.25%). Overall, 91.2% of students thought that the program provided an opportunity to think and reflect principles of professional behaviors in dissection room and 93.8% believed that they would use the ethical points they learned in future. comparison of the pre-test and post-test indicate that at the end of the event, students feel more mentally prepared to attend the dissection room and the number of the students who considered cadaver donation for medical education purposes ethical increased by 14.58% (p-value < 0.001). Our study also revealed that students' mean fear and nausea decreased after the program while their enthusiasm and interest in dissection increased (p-value < 0.05). The chemical fume of the dissection room was considered as the main stress-inducing factor by students.

Conclusion:

Giving adequate preparation towards cadaver dissection sessions helps medical students to better understand the principles of professional behaviors and using film to foster these behaviors, may help provide a proper opportunity for them to reflect on principles of ethics and professionalism regarding cadaver donation and dissection.

Keywords: Anatomy, Attitude, Professionalism, Cadaver, Dissection