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ARTICLE

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PALLIATIVE CARE ATTITUDE BETWEEN MEDICAL STUDENTS AND NON-MEDICAL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: understand the current status of college students' knowledge of Palliative care, and comparatively analyze the difference in awareness and cognition between medical and non-medical students, and to provide basic data for the advancement of Palliative care education and clinical practice. **Methods:** from August to December 2019, a convenient sampling method was used to conduct an online survey to 405 college students with self-edited questionnaires, including a dimension of awareness, recognition, and knowledge content of Palliative care, and 405 valid questionnaires were recovered. **Results:** a total of 97 out of 405 college students have knowledge about Palliative care, with an overall awareness rate of 24%. There was a significant difference between medical students and non-medical students in the understanding of Palliative care ($\chi^2=34.671, P=0.000$), and the awareness rate of medical students was higher. After understanding the knowledge of Palliative care, 73.8% of medical students held an approval attitude for it, and 49.5% of non-medical students approved it too. There was a significant difference between the two ($\chi^2=27.216, P=0.000$). "When their family members are suffering from incurable diseases," 64.2% medical students received relatives to have Palliative care and 49.1% of non-medical students agree with medical students. There was a significant difference between the two ($\chi^2=10.803, P=0.005$). **Conclusions:** medical students' awareness and recognition of Palliative care is higher than that of non-medical students, but the overall level of college students' awareness of Palliative care is relatively low, and further knowledge education is needed.

KEYWORDS

Palliative care, medical students, comparative study.

1. INTRODUCTION

The definition of Palliative care is the legal, physical, emotional, spiritual, and financial support provided to the dying patients and their families^[1]. Palliative care is not equivalent to Palliative Care, Palliative care includes Palliative Care. Palliative Care is the final stage of Palliative care^[2]. In recent years, with the aging of the population and the improvement of public health awareness, the quality of life of patients and families at the end of life has been put forward higher and higher requirements. It is particularly important to popularize the concept of Palliative care in clinical practice, which is a practical form in the process of modern bio-psycho-social medical model. College life is an important stage for students to talent their training and socialization abilities. Carrying out the education of Palliative care knowledge will help the general education of Palliative care to the public.

2. OBJECTS AND METHODS

2.1 Objects

From August to December 2019, a convenient sampling method was adopted to conduct an online questionnaire survey on the students of Jiaxing University through an app called Questionnaire Star. A total of 405 college students completed the questionnaire survey, with an

average age of 20.34 ± 1.453 . There were 187 medical students and 218 non-medical students.

2.2 Investigation methods

By consulting relevant literature, combined with the knowledge training of Palliative care and the interview with experts, designed our own questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into 2 parts. The general information includes gender, age, place of birth, major of study, grade, etc. The cognitive survey part of Palliative care includes "have you heard of Palliative care", "approaches to understand the Palliative care", "the purpose of Palliative care and the cognition of practitioners", "whether to accept relatives and family members for Palliative care", "whether to be willing to discuss death with others", "views on death", and so on.

2.3 Statistical methods

The survey data was entered using EPIDATA data software, and statistical analysis was performed using SPSS22.0 to compare the differences between medical students and non-medical students. Counting data is described by frequency, and measurement data is described by average. Chi-square test was used to compare the rates, and the difference of $P < 0.05$ was statistically significant.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 General information of survey subjects

A total of 405 questionnaires were collected, 405 of which were valid. The effective rate was 100%, with 317 students from Zhejiang province, accounting for 78.3%. There was no significant difference in the sex ratio between medical students and non-medical students ($X^2=27.216, P=0.000$), and no significant difference between different academic years ($X^2=5.323, P=0.256$).

3.2 Comparison of knowledge and cognition between medical students and non-medical students in palliative care

Of the 405 college students, a total of 97 students have heard or learned about Palliative care, and the awareness rate is 24%. Among them, there were 70 medical students (37.4%) and 27 non-medical students (12.4%) with a significant difference between the two ($X^2=34.671, P=0.000$). Also, there were significant differences in understanding approaches between medical students and non-medical students. And the rate of medical students' access to information mainly through the "news network" (23.4%) and "professional lectures" (14.4%) is higher than that of non-medical students. In terms of understanding the content of Palliative care, there was only a significant difference between medical students and non-medical students in the improvement of patients' living standard by Palliative care ($X^2=11.097, P=0.001$), as shown in table 1. there was no significant difference in cognition between medical students and non-medical students of the Palliative care component (physician nursing, staff, volunteer, social worker).

Table 1: Comparison of cognition degree of palliative care between medical students and non-medical students.

Questionnaire item	Medical students	Non-medical students	X^2	P
Approaches to understand				
News Network	44(23.5)	22(10.1)	13.325	0.000
Talking of family members and friends	17(9.1)	9(4.1)	4.126	0.042
Professional lectures	27(14.4)	5(2.3)	20.403	0.000
Professional magazines	15(8.0)	6(2.8)	5.684	0.017
Other	13(7.0)	3(1.4)	8.247	0.004
Content of palliative care				
Improve the living standards of patients	133(7.1)	120(55.0)	11.097	0.001

Make patients in the comfort of the care while maintaining dignity	162(86.6)	178(81.7)	1.852	0.173
To enable patients to receive adequate and correct medical advice	86(46.0)	104(47.7)	0.119	0.730
Plan for the rest of your life and accomplish your unfinished goals	114(61.0)	113(51.8)	3.404	0.065
After the death of a loved one, consolation for family members	90(48.1)	87(39.9)	2.764	0.096

3.3 Contrastive analysis of medical students and non-medical students' attitudes towards Palliative care

73.8% of medical students are supportive of Palliative care, and 26.2% are neutral, while non-medical students show 49.5% to support it, 47.7% neutral, and 2.8% against, there was a significant difference between the two ($X^2=27.216, P=0.000$). Also, There was a significant difference in the choice of whether one's family members were willing to receive Palliative care when suffering from incurable diseases ($X^2=10.803, P=0.005$), 64.2% of medical students are willing to let their loved ones receive Palliative care, and among non-medical students, 49.1% of students are willing to receive the relevant treatment and care for their relatives, as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Comparison of attitudes towards to palliative care between medical students and non-medical students.

Questionnaire item	Medical students	Non-medical students	X^2	P
Views on palliative care				
Support	138(73.8)	108(49.5)		
Nonsupport	0(0.0)	6(2.8)	27.216	0.000
neutral	49(26.2)	104(47.7)		
Whether to accept family members for Palliative care				
Yes	120(64.2)	107(49.1)		
No	16(8.6)	18(8.3)	10.803	0.005
Not clear	51(27.3)	93(42.7)		

4. DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed that medical students had higher understanding and cognition of Palliative care than non-medical students, but the overall awareness rate was only 24%. Domestic scholars' research on the knowledge of students' Palliative care found that for "the Palliative care's treatment requires the abandonment of meaningless treatment", "the treatment is equivalent to euthanasia" and "the treatment is only for the current medical conditions who is hopeless", and the accuracy rate of questions is less than 50%^[3]. It can be seen that the whole group of Chinese college students have insufficient understanding of Palliative care's knowledge. This may be related to the lack of life education and death education in college education system in China. The "Five Total Care" ^[4] launched by the Taiwan government of China proposes that end-of-term care should be separated from mechanical care and turn Palliative care into a care system that includes the whole person, the whole family, the whole process, the whole team and the whole society, and not only rely on the care of doctors and nurses. In order to realize this mode of care, the whole society must adopt a scientific attitude towards the dying patients, and provide them with physiological, psychological, social and spiritual satisfaction at the end of their lives, so that they can say goodbye without regret. The results of this study showed that more than 70% of medical students and nearly 50% of non-medical students were supportive of Palliative care, and were willing to let their relatives spend the last moments of life in the mode of peaceful care when suffering from irreversible diseases, which shows that after having a certain understanding of Palliative care, both medical and non-medical students have a high level of support for Palliative care. College students are in a critical period of life outlook and value cultivation. The education of them on the knowledge of Palliative care is helpful for social groups to improve their cognitive level of life quality at the end of life.

The United States, Europe, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and other countries started Palliative care earlier and developed corresponding education systems to learn about Palliative care^[5]. In recent years, a few universities in China have launched relevant courses, such as Peking University Union Medical College, Peking University Medical College, China Medical University and West China Medical University, etc, which offer palliative medicine courses. Most of the courses are taught by postgraduate students, and few are taught by undergraduate students^[6]. According to this study, less than 30% of medical students learned about the related knowledge of Palliative care's treatment from "professional magazines" and "professional lectures". Non-medical students have a more single way of understanding and lack of professionalism. More than 90% of medical and non-medical students hope to improve their awareness of Palliative care through the Internet and professional channels. Domestic scholars' research on Beijing hospice volunteers of college student shows that "participating in professional courses

and receiving training before starting volunteer service has effectively promoted the efficiency of voluntary service and deepened the emotional awareness of Palliative care"^[7]. It is suggested that colleges and universities carry out the voluntary service of Palliative care for college students, which is helpful to consolidate the professional knowledge of medical students through professional training, not only to serve patients, but also to improve clinical practice skills. For non-medical students, it is helpful to know the significance of Palliative care for improving the quality of life of patients at the end of life.

5. CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, medical students have a higher degree of recognition for Palliative care than non-medical students, but college students' knowledge of Palliative care is not enough, and they have the desire for further professional study. Therefore, it is necessary to further explore the educational methods and practice system of Palliative care knowledge for college students.

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