

A Study on Awareness and Attitude of First-Year Medical Students on Epilepsy in University of Khartoum 2020-2021

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Abstract : Background: Epilepsy is a common but widely misunderstood illness. Consequently, patients with epilepsy suffer from considerable stigmatization in society. This social stigma and discrimination often cause more suffering for the patients than the disease itself. Since very few studies have explored the misperceptions about epilepsy among university students in Sudan, it is not possible to provide focused intervention aimed at eliminating this discrimination. Methods: A cross-sectional study was applied among the first-year medical students at the University of Khartoum between December (2020) and February (2021). A 29-item standardized questionnaire was self-administered by 198 students (out of 320) who agreed to participate in this study. Google form was the tool used to collect the data. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science software version 26. Result: Overall, the results indicate a negative trend in knowledge and attitude toward epilepsy. The vast majority of the respondents (84.8%) have read or heard about epilepsy, while 43.9% had seen someone with epilepsy. Only 7.5% of the participants reported that epilepsy is contagious, whereas 43.4% of them think that epilepsy is a psychological disorder. About 62.2% of students think head/birth trauma is a cause of epilepsy. On the other side, about 15.7% and 5.1% believed that evil spirits and punishment from god can also be a possible cause of epilepsy; we found these false beliefs are more common in participants from rural areas (p -value < 0.05). In regard to attitude, 19.7% of students thought that it is inappropriate for a patient with epilepsy to have a child. This attitude correlates with the mother's education as the percentage is higher for those who have lower mother's education (through secondary school education and below) ($p < 0.05$). The majority of Our participant knew that some people with epilepsy need life-long drug treatment; this belief was found to be more common in females than their counterparts ($p < 0.05$). . Finally, most of the respondents (93.9%) thought that a child with epilepsy Can be successful in a normal class. This belief is four-time as common in participants whose mothers have higher education (through university education and above) compared with corresponding respondents ($p < 0.05$). Conclusion: This study concludes that students' knowledge about epilepsy is limited and requires immediate intervention through educational campaigns to develop a well-informed and tolerant community.

Keywords : epilepsy, awareness, attitude, university students, Sudan

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