

Attitudes Towards Homosexuality, Bisexuality and Transgenderism among Medical Students of a Sri Lankan University

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Abstract : Introduction: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) patients experience discrimination, insensitivity, and ignorance about LGBT-specific health needs among healthcare providers. Developing the correct attitudes among medical students towards LGBT may help provide them with optimal healthcare. Objectives: This study aimed at assessing the attitudes of medical students towards the LGBT community. Methodology: A cross-sectional descriptive study was among all the medical students in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, using a validated online questionnaire. The questionnaire focused on eight areas. The data were descriptively analyzed, and the demographic groups were compared. Results: 358 students completed the survey. The response rate was 34.26%. Their attitudes on traditional gender roles and comfortability in interacting with LGBT people were moderate, and they disagreed with negative LGBT social beliefs. They knew less about the origin of sexuality/gender of LGBT. Although they accepted LGBT as a part of diversity, they discouraged normalizing the social practices of LGBT people. Their acceptance and association of LGBT were moderately positive. A minority has encountered LGBT in close social circles, and the majority of them were batch-mates. Although males' knowledge about the origin of LGBT was higher, they favoured traditional gender roles more. The religious groups showed no differences. The favourability of attitudes towards LGBT reflected respondents' political ideology. Conclusion: Although medical students' knowledge on the sexuality/gender basis of LGBT is poor, they have moderately favourable attitudes towards them. They accept LGBT as a part of social diversity but not their social practices. Poor knowledge, lack of encounters, cultural influences, and political ideology may have influenced their attitudes.

Keywords : medical students, attitude, LGBT, diversity

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