

Evaluating the Knowledge and Skill of Final Year Pharmacy Students in Maternal and Child Health at a University in South Africa

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Abstract : Background: High rate of maternal and child mortality is a global concern. Nationally, it constitutes one of South Africa's quadruple burdens of diseases. Pharmacists have a crucial role in maternal and child health care delivery and as such should be equipped with adequate knowledge and skill required to contribute to maternal and child well-being. The International Pharmaceutical Federation statement of policy (2013) outlines pharmacist-led interventions in accordance with the World Health Organisation's interventions in maternal, new-born and child health care. The South African Pharmacy Council's guideline on Good Pharmacy Practice (2010) also stipulates the minimum standards required to participate in reproductive, maternal and child care. Pharmacy schools are obliged to train pharmacy students to meet priority health needs of the population so that graduates are 'fit for purpose'. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the knowledge and skill of final year pharmacy students at a university in South Africa to determine their preparedness to contribute effectively to maternal and child health care. Method: A quantitative, descriptive, non-randomized baseline study was conducted among the final year students at the School of Pharmacy. Data was collected using a questionnaire designed in sections to assess knowledge of contraception, maternal and child health directed at the primary care level and framed within the scope of practice required of an entry-level generalist pharmacist. Participants' skill in infant growth assessment was assessed in a section of the questionnaire in a written format. Participants ticked the topics they had been exposed to on a curriculum content assessment tool which was not graded. A pilot study examined the clarity and suitability of question items, and duration to complete the questionnaire. A score of 50% in each section of the questionnaire indicated a pass. The questionnaire was delivered in campus lecture venue. Results: Of the 102 students in final year, 53 (52%) students consented to participate in the study. Only 13.2% of participants scored above 50% in each section. Forty five (85%) participants scored above 50% in the contraception section while 40 (75%) scored less than 50% in the skills assessment. Less than half (45.3%) of the participants had a total score above 50%. Being a parent or working part-time as pharmacist assistance did not have any influence on the performance of the participants. Evaluation of participants' curriculum content exposure showed differences in exposure to the various topics. Exposure to contraception teaching received the most recognition. Conclusion: Maternal and child health curriculum content should be reviewed at the university to enhance the knowledge and skill of pharmacy graduates.

Keywords : final year pharmacy students, knowledge and skill, maternal and child health, South Africa

Conference Title : ICMNCH 2018 : International Conference on Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health

Conference Location : Venice, Italy

Conference Dates : June 21-22, 2018