

Original Article

Medical students' perceptions towards international students, lecturers, and curriculum: Study report from a Malaysian private medical college

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Abstract

Background & Objective: Developing a global mindset and cultural competency is an important component of Internationalization in Medical Education (IoME) to prepare graduates ready to serve in interconnected global communities. To understand students' attitude towards IoME, this study explored their perceptions of international students, lecturers, and curriculum.

Material & Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among medical students of the academic year 2018–2019 from University Kuala Lumpur, Royal College of Medicine Perak, Malaysia, using a self-administered validated questionnaire. All 569 students from years 1 to 5 were invited; out of 529 responses, 505 were eligible for analysis.

Results: The vast majority (85.1%) of the respondents agreed that all medical schools should have international students. The combined ratings of "comfortable" and "very comfortable" with international students as classmates, as friends, and with international lecturers were 62.6%, 70.3%, and 66.7%, respectively. The transnational curriculum was selected as most appropriate by 45%. Good perception towards IoME was exhibited by 52.2% and was significantly associated with students' intention to do elective overseas among female ($P = 0.002$) and year 3 ($P = 0.038$) subgroups. Their perception was positively linked with their perceived preparedness to study or work overseas among females ($P = 0.004$).

Conclusion: There is a positive association between the respondents' perceptions of IoME and their perceived readiness to study or work abroad more. Therefore, the design and implementation of curriculum should be in line with international standards to deliver both clinical and cultural competency that could be enhanced by race diversification among local students and having international students on campuses.

Keywords: internationalization, Malaysia, medical students, medical education, attitude, perception

Introduction

Global medical mobilization has become an established phenomenon. The importance of transnational collaboration in medical service delivery, biotechnology, and research activities has been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are motivational factors and driving forces for medical professionals' migration, such as financial gains, training and research opportunities, and seeking a politically stable environment for professional growth and family prospects. Some medical schools from export countries have a mission to train

doctors for local employment as well as for a global physician workforce.

Therefore, the internationalization component should be an essential part in standard medical school curricula to provide medical students with a full understanding of global, social, cultural, and ethical issues surrounding medical practice and research (1).

Internationalization in Medical Education (IoME) is best described as "the process of purposely integrating international, intercultural, or global dimensions into medical education in order to enhance its quality and

