

Basic Concerns And Difficulties Faced in Attending Conferences By Medical and Dental Post Graduates. A Questionnaire Survey

Research Article

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Abstract

Introduction: Conferences merely play an important role in learning and spreading education, sharpening the skills, to interact with peers, trying the new modifications, evolving novel and relevant ideas, developing unity in contentious areas all leading to improvement in health-care delivery and patient outcomes.

Material and Methodology: The data was collected from 500 postgraduates with a questionnaire sent over through what's app application and electronic mail sourced from the post graduates repository in the month of September, 2020. The purpose of the study was informed and explained to the participants. If there was no response the participants were again reminded after a week which increased the response by 10%. The response rate of questionnaire was 90% (450 responses out of 500 participants).

Results: The study subjects included were 280(62.2%) females and 170(37.8%) males. The majority of the students were Dental postgraduates 326(72.4%) and the remaining subjects were Medical postgraduates 124(27.6%). The *p value ≥ 0.05 is considered to be significant (Chi- square test of significance) and there is a significant association between the medical and dental post graduates difficulties, while there is no significant difference regarding the prime concern.

Conclusions: The concerns and difficulties can help in planning and conducting conferences in a better way which will enable the post graduates and professionals of various fields. Each conference should have a specific goal, mission, and vision which is different from others so that a clear-cut objective is achieved at the end.

Keywords: Conference; Post Graduate; Medical and Dental.

Introduction

Developing student's knowledge and skill is an important venture in professional education. Post graduates are a group of highly skilled professionals who have the ethical and moral responsibility to provide their patients with the best possible treatment. Post graduate scan update their skills and knowledge by attending conferences, pre-conferences, fellowship courses and continuing dental education (CDE) program regularly [1]. Conferences organized by dental/medical association and related events are a dominant feature of the academic, professional and social life of all the post graduates. These events such as, workshops, pre-conferences, continuing dental/medical education come in all sizes from rela-

tively small local gatherings to large regional, national and international mega-conferences that mobilize thousands of clinicians, researchers, exhibitors and staffs [2]. These activities add a lot to our knowledge and there is no substitute for conferences, workshops, seminars, hands on training and pre-conferences which provide unique learning and career building opportunities [3].

Post graduates attend Specialty conferences to present their work, share their knowledge, gain knowledge, attend workshops, meet colleagues and peers and to know and learn the latest / recent advancements in their specialty [4]. Sometimes, time can be spent with collaborators or competitors from abroad, listen to the lectures of favorite speakers and to explore places and food etc [4].

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But choice of conferences may reflect the personal, clinical, financial and social needs of the post graduates in attending the conference. When perusing the programme, we can ask ourself how well the conference matches the personal continued professional development needs in terms of topics and speakers, but increasingly, the programme might describe both the mode of delivery of the education as well as giving multiple options for future career [5]. Hence this study was done to assess the way of approach towards medical and dental post graduates towards attending conferences.

Methodology

This descriptive questionnaire study was conducted in the month of September 2020, among 500 postgraduates consisting of both medical and dental. The questionnaire was designed to obtain the attitude of medical and dental postgraduates towards attending conferences. The self administered questionnaire was developed with 10 multiple choice questions and was tested among convenience sample of 10 participants to gain feedback on the overall acceptability of questionnaire, in terms of length and language clarity. Based on their feedback, the questionnaire did not require any corrections. Test- retest reliability was found to be 80%. Face validity was also assessed for the questionnaire with the expert committee. The data was collected from the study participants with a pretested questionnaire sent over through Whats App application and electronic mail sourced from the post graduates repository in the month of September, 2020. The purpose of the study was informed and explained to participants. If there is no response, the participants were again reminded after a week which increased the response by 10%. The response rate of questionnaire was 90% (450 responses out of 500 participants).

Results

The survey had a response rate of 90% (450 responses out of 500 participants) and the study subjects included 280(62.2%) females and 170 (37.8%) males. The majority of the students were Dental postgraduates 326(72.4%) and the remaining subjects were Medical postgraduates 124(27.6%) (Table 1).

The difficulties faced in attending conferences by medical and dental post graduates were the following i) Lack of time to prepare ii) Finance iii) Travel iv) Others.

The primary reason behind financial difficulty is that post graduate's face a lot of expenses during their course. Attending a conference definitely adds financial burden to the post graduates. In this survey it was found that 29.4% of medical postgraduates and 20.7 % dental postgraduates cited finance. Next was adequate time to prepare for a conference is also one difficulty for the

postgraduates due to their hectic schedule, work and completion of their quotas. In this survey it was found that 16.5% of medical postgraduates and 18.2% dental postgraduates cited lack of time. Many postgraduates have chosen others, which included their own reasons apart from travel, finance and lack of time. In this survey it was found that 17.6% of medical postgraduates and 11.4% dental postgraduates cited others. Lastly the means of travel was also a major difficulty because post graduates travel through different means of transport where safety and expenses plays a role. In this survey it was found that 7.1% of medical postgraduates and 13.6 % dental postgraduates cited travel as the least difficult. The P value being 0.001 for 450 participants having a percentage of (100%)* (Table 2).

The prime concern of attending conferences by medical and dental were i) Location and amenities, ii) Preconference/workshops, iii) Financial listings iv) Guest speakers. In this survey it was found that 32.9% of medical postgraduates and 35.7% dental postgraduates cited location and amenities, 28.2% of medical postgraduates and 22.9% dental postgraduates cited Preconferences/workshops, 10.6% of medical postgraduates and 15.1% dental postgraduates cited financial listings and 23.6% of medical postgraduates and 28.2 % dental postgraduates cited guest speakers. The P value being 0.108 for 450 participants with a percentage of (100%). The *p value ≥ 0.05 is considered to be significant (Chi-square test of significance) and there is a significant association between medical and dental variations and difficulties, while there is no significant difference in regarding the prime concern between the post graduates (Table 2).

Discussion

A conference is a decisive gathering of people aiming to pool ideas on at least one topic of joint interest or needing to attain a common goal through interaction. Conferencing is being continued for reasoning, problem solving and sense making. Certainly, it is an age old debate, between individuals with different views that used effective questions to stimulate clinical thinking. The difference between a convention and conference is that convention is a large meeting of people who have gathered to talk about their shared work, common interests or to make decisions as a group whereas a conference is a small meeting that is generally designed for discussion, problem-solving, fact-finding and consultation [6]. Conferences vary from small to large scale. National conferences are organized inside the Country and are mostly organized by the Universities and Colleges. Regional conference is a regional division of a national organization. International conferences are basically with a larger audience with the participation from across the globe and State conferences are held within the state. As the learning preference and attitude of dental and medical postgraduates has drastically changed over the last several years, this survey

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of the study participants.

Variables		
	Age (mean±S.D)	27.05 ± 3.84
Gender	Male N(%)	170(37.8)
	Female N(%)	280(62.2)
Speciality	Medical postgraduate N(%)	124(27.6)
	Dental postgraduate N(%)	326(72.4)

Table 2. Medical and dental based variations on difficulties and primary concern on attending conferences.

Variables	Medical N(%)	Dental N(%)	Total N(%)
• Difficulties on attending conferences			
Lack of time to prepare	28(16.5)	51(18.2)	79(17.6)
Finance	50(29.4)	58(20.7)	108(24)
Travel	12(7.1)	38(13.6)	50(11.1)
Others	30(17.6)	32(11.4)	62(13.8)
Finance and travel	16(9.4)	38(13.6)	54(12)
Lack of time to prepare and finance	12(7.1)	11(3.9)	23(5.1)
Lack of time to prepare and travel	0(0)	16(5.7)	16(3.6)
All the above	22(12.9)	36(12.9)	58(12.9)
P value	0.001*		450(100)
• Prime concern on attending conferences			
Location and amenities	56(32.9)	100(35.7%)	156(34.7)
Preconferences/ workshops	48(28.2)	64(22.9)	112(24.9)
Financial listings	18(10.6)	50(17.9)	68(15.1)
Guest speakers	66(23.6)	48(28.2)	114(25.3)
P value	0.108		450(100)

was conducted to know and assess the attitude of the post graduates towards their interest in attending conferences [7]. Postgraduates attend conferences to gain knowledge, earn credit points, present paper/posters and to enjoy with peers which is a both educative and fun experience. Infact, a lot of benefits are gained by knowing the recent advances, hands on workshops and social knowledge which can be implemented in their day to day practice. The conferences can be attracted with sponsorships, free pre-conferences, early bird offers and with some cultural events and banquet. In the present study majority of the students were Dental postgraduates and the remaining were Medical postgraduates. The prime difficulties faced by medical and dental post graduates in attending conferences were financial difficulty, travel followed by lack of time to prepare. The reason behind the financial difficulty is post graduates need to face a lot of expenses during their course which include their fees structure, educational loan, less or no stipend, books, materials and their essentials etc. A conference adds more financial burden to the postgraduates. According to the results obtained, regarding the prime concern of attending conferences. The post graduates check for location and amenities for a proper comfortable and a safe stay. Post graduates tend to check the schedule of the conference to gather an idea about the guest speakers and the preconference/workshops available. Therefore the *p value ≥ 0.05 is considered to be significant (Chi-square test of significance) and there is a significant association between medical and dental postgraduates and their difficulties, while there is no significant difference regarding the prime concern between the same. Therefore, conferences should be organized in such a way that it encourages questioning, reflective and creative thinking in both medical and dental postgraduates [3].

Conclusion

In this study there was a significant association between medical and dental postgraduates and difficulties, while there is no significant difference in regarding the prime concern between the post graduates. It can be concluded that Medical and dental post graduates show an equal amount of interest and concern in attending conferences. The importance of these conferences needs to be evaluated in order to determine their success and also to enable planning of future programs. At the end of a conference, each post graduate should have gained significant knowledge and advanced clinical methods which can be incorporated in their daily practices as well as future career.

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