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The professional quality of life of medical students engaging in clinical appointments during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Background: COVID-19 has led to stigmatization towards patients and healthcare workers. Medical students engaged in clinical appointments, are more prone to get COVID-19 viral infection compared to other university students and general population. This impact of stigma may affect the medical students.

Objective: To assess the professional quality of life through the level of compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress of medical students and the associated factors.

Methods & Materials: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among all students of the Faculty of Medicine and Allied Sciences, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka engaged in clinical appointments during the pandemic. A self-administered questionnaire comprising of the ‘Professional Quality of Life Scale’, was used as the study instrument. The data were analyzed using the SPSS beta version. Correlations were analyzed with Pearson correlation ($p=0.05$).

Results: The total number was 180. Response rate was 66% ($n=120$). Out of the respondents, 29.2% had been exposed to COVID-19 confirmed patients. Forty-six percent of the students had high scores for compassion satisfaction. Only, 1.7% had a high (≥ 42 in Professional Quality of Life Scale) burnout scale. Burnout was higher (≥ 42) in both surgery, and gynecology & obstetrics appointments. Secondary traumatic stress was higher in medicine and surgery appointments (50%). Exposure to a confirmed COVID-19 patients had shown a significant impact on having higher burnout ($r=-0.199$, $p=0.029$) among students.

Conclusion: Exposure to confirmed COVID-19 patients during clinical work has shown a significant impact on burnout. There is no significant impact on level of compassion satisfaction, and secondary traumatic stress.

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