

Sports for Wellbeing: Attitude Changes of Fresh Medical Students Towards Sport Activities at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya

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Sports and physical activity has long been used as a tool to improve the mental, physical and social well-being. Strong scientific evidence points out that physical inactivity is a major risk factor for non-communicable diseases such as coronary heart disease, cancers and diabetes. Therefore, it is good to promote the healthy lifestyle choices among university students. The main objective of the study was to identify attitudes towards sports amongst the first year students of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya. Furthermore, we tried to identify perception variations of these students and how to influence their academic discipline to participate in sports activities. This study was based on a self-administrated questionnaire on 141 (59 male & 82 female) first year students at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya. The software program "'SPSS 16.0' was used to analyze the data. Amongst the 141 students, 78 (55.3%) were not involved in sports before entering the medical faculty. The main reasons were not enough time (46.5%), fear of disturbances to studies (23.2%) and parental oppression (5.8%). There were 134 (95%) students who wanted to participate in sports during their undergraduate years. The main reasons for their opting to participate in sports during undergraduate years were to achieve a healthy and balanced life (34.9%), for mental relief (28%), to meet new friends and for the feeling of win and victory. Most of the students preferred racket sports (37.7%) and general fitness programs (27.2%) whereas some preferred indoor (15.3%) and outdoor (12.5%) sports. Only a few students opted for martial arts (6.9%). In conclusion, most of the students were not engaged in sports before entering the university. However, after entering the Medical Faculty most students have changed their attitude towards sports with a fresh mind. We identified the reasons that affected their negative and positive attitudes towards sports activities.

Keywords: attitude; medical students; sports activity; university