



Module-Based Training on Medical Ethics: A Way to Get Ethically Sound Physicians

December 2023

Key Messages:

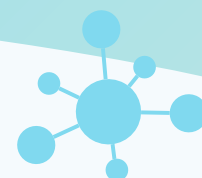
1. Healthcare decisions are based not only on clinical and technical grounds but also on ethical grounds from the era of initial practice.
2. Structured training in medical ethics in Bangladesh is not well-formed to date.
3. In the current study, the newly developed modules for “Module Based Training on Medical Ethics” for postgraduate trainees of different disciplines under a fellowship program helped significantly increase their knowledge of medical ethics.
4. Such training could be considered for scaling up and inclusion in the fellowship programs nationwide for the postgraduate trainees of all subjects, as the country needs ethically sound physicians.
5. The modules, already developed and tested in this study, could be used as a baseline for future use.

Introduction

This policy brief is based on the research project Outcome of “Module Based Training on Medical Ethics” on Post Graduate Trainees of Fellowship Program in Bangladesh-which represents a first attempt at comprehensive training on medical ethics, as well as assessing the effectiveness of module based training on Medical Ethics to date. The policy brief will summarise the report and its findings. The rationale for a national approach is greater effectiveness.

Problem Statement

Medical ethics is the code of conduct for the medical professional to render the best possible service to mankind and maintain the profession's honour and dignity. (1) Healthcare decisions are based not only on clinical and technical grounds but also on ethical grounds from the era of initial practice. We still abide by the Geneva Declaration with some modifications during the age. (2) Although clinical and technical aspects can be primarily considered, ethical issues in patient management must be considered. A framework of code of conduct governing doctor's decisions and attitudes may help overcome this problem. It has been practised for hundreds of years and controls how physicians are supposed to perform their professional work. Although the Bangladesh Medical & Dental Council (BMDC) introduced the Code of Professional Conduct, Etiquette and The training module on Medical Ethics was introduced at the undergraduate level in various countries. (4) In 1999, the World Medical Association “strongly recommended” to medical schools that teaching ethics and human rights should be made compulsory in their curriculum. (5) Structured training in medical ethics in Bangladesh needs to be better formed. Moreover, a question may arise - when should such training be imparted? As medical students in Bangladesh come directly into contact with patient care under supervision during their training tenure, it is considered the right time to impart training in medical ethics. World Health Organization suggests, “Development of teaching-learning material based on country-specific situations is considered very necessary to make the teaching of ethics more relevant in a given context.” (6) Considering these points, a training module of Medical Ethics for the different levels of trainees of Fellowship program is the need of the hour.



Study Findings

In this research project, a module for the different levels of trainees of the fellowship program in medical ethics in patient's care was designed and standardised, and the outcome of "Module Based Training on Medical Ethics" on Post Graduate Trainees of Fellowship Program in Bangladesh was ascertained. After obtaining ethical clearance, this interventional study was conducted between November 2022 and May 2023 in different levels of 29 conveniently selected trainees of Competency-based Residential Training for Fellowship (CRTF) under the Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (FCPS).

Modules used in this study were on the doctor's professional relationships and duties, patient's rights and responsibilities, patient's autonomy and consent to treatment, the difference between privacy and confidentiality, truth-telling and breaking bad news, and the decision of resuscitation or withdrawing life.

Support ethical dilemmas regarding emergency medicine, health practitioner relations with healthcare organisations, reproductive health, organ transplantation donation, public health, genetics, research and resource allocation, and Bangladesh's medical code of ethics.

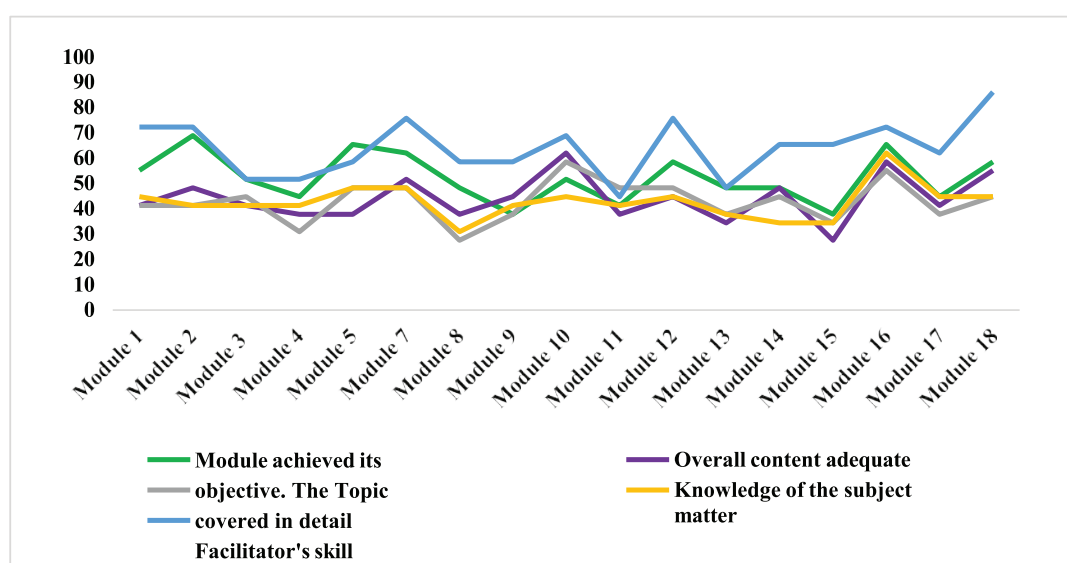


Figure 1: Quality of modules

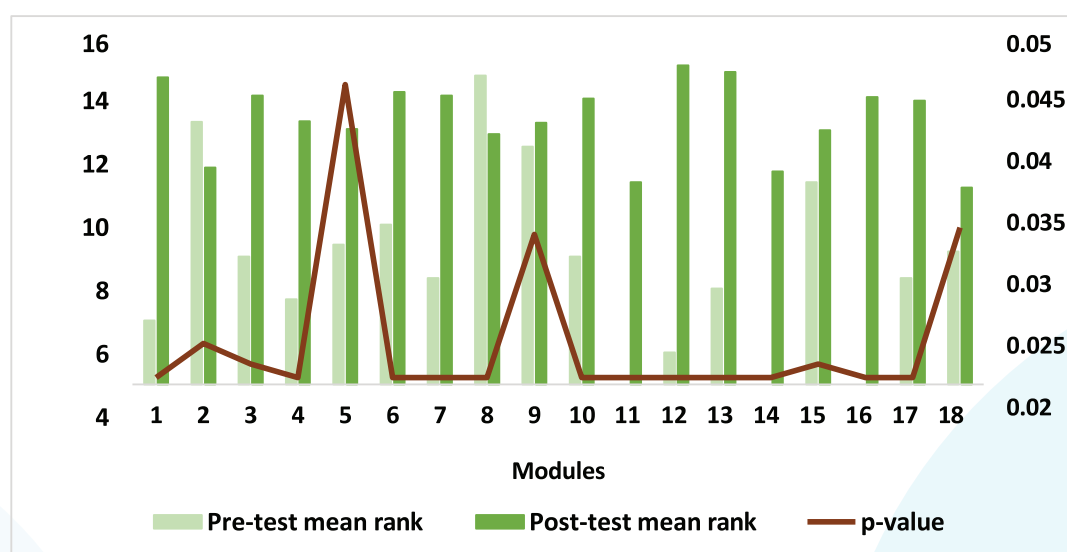


Figure 2: Comparison of pre-test and post-test among the participants for various modules



Most participants were male (62.1%) and from the Internal Medicine (58.6%) department.

All the module was tested before and after presentation, and the result was compared by the Wilcoxon signed-rank test and found significant ($p < 0.05$).

Participants anonymously scored the environment, module quality in perspective of knowledge, depth and presentation style, and almost all were ranked 'excellent'.

This study had a few limitations. Only the cognitive domain of knowledge could be assessed. The sample size needed to be higher and more representative. There might also be selection bias as the participants were chosen conveniently.



Policy Recommendations

1. The training on "Module Based Training on Medical Ethics" for postgraduate trainees of a fellowship program increased their knowledge level. It could be considered for scaling up and inclusion in the fellowship programs nationwide as the country requires ethically sound physicians.
2. The modules, already developed and tested in this study, could be used as a baseline for future use.

As healthcare practitioner's professionalism and ethics are obligatory for the success of their careers to meet professional standards, a series of medical ethics training sessions should be assimilated into the curriculum, especially in postgraduate training. Reflection on a century characterised by tremendous scientific progress and intense human suffering on a vast scale makes it clear that new ways of thinking are now required about illness, human suffering, health care and other forces that shape the world and profoundly affect health.

References

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