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**PATIENTS' ATTITUDE  
TOWARDS  
STUDENT DOCTORS  
OF IOM  
FINAL REPORT**

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**SUBMITTED TO  
NEPAL HEALTH RESEARCH COUNCIL  
(NHRC)  
RAMSHAHPATH, KATHMANDU**



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# Table of Contents

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Summary	1
Introduction	1
Literature Review	2
Methodology	2
Findings (Result)	3
Discussion	6
Acknowledgement	7
Reference	7
Annex	8

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# PATIENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS STUDENT DOCTORS OF IOM

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## Summary:

The attitudes of 74 patients to student doctors in medical, surgical and Gynae/Obs wards of TUTH were assessed by questionnaire. A total of 85% of the patients were favorable to the presence of student doctors in the hospital. Around 91% of the attitude statements were positively responded. The patients admitted for the first time in the hospital and with shorter duration of stay found to have more positive attitude. Factors like age, sex and address didn't show significant different in the attitude.

**Keywords:** Patients' attitude; Student doctors; Doctors - patient relation, TUTH

## Introduction:

One of the premises of the Parsonian model of doctor-patient relationship states, "*Health care is a social role relationship between a helping agent and a person needing help*". This relationship is consider psychologically and socially as half cure treatment procedure<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the nature of relationship between doctor and patient has some degree of significant impact on the overall quality of healthcare. The patients' compliance and satisfaction is greatly influenced by the appearance, behavior and the communication skill of the doctor during consultation or any contact. One of the recent studies indicated that there is a sub-optimal doctor-patient communication at tertiary care hospital in Nepal<sup>2</sup>. With the emerging medical colleges in the country and the out-flowing number of medical students in many hospitals, this complex relationship has more importance and responsibility than even before. In TUTH patients are mostly in contact with medical students (undergraduate, graduates, residents) and they must have developed some attitude towards student doctors during their social and medical interaction. Till date, there has been no study of the attitude of the patients in the hospital to the presence and involvement of the student in their clinical care in TUTH. So, we tried to find out the real scenario in our context. This present study was designed to use a special questionnaire for the assessment of attitudes of the patients in different wards to the presence and involvement of the student doctors in their clinical care.



## Literature Review:

Quite similar type of attitude study has been performed in London<sup>3</sup> in 1985 and it was the study done with total 92 patient in maternity unit in Charring Cross and West Minister Medical School, University College London.

A total of 76% attitude statements by the patients were found to be in favors of the presence of student doctors, with more favorable attitude towards male students and more positive attitudes in patients from lower social class group.

However, this particular study was done only with the female patients. So the final result of the patient's attitudes towards student doctors could be considered bias towards only one sex, as it could not involve the attitude of the male patients. Besides, most women in obstetrics ward who were about to deliver or had delivered babies might not be considered themselves to be ill or the real patients.

## Methodology:

This was a cross sectional study which was kind of enumerative survey<sup>4</sup> and that was carried out for 1 week in different wards of TUTH. Overall 100 questionnaires, written in Nepali script were distributed randomly in three strata i.e. medical ward (35), surgical ward (35), and Gynae/Obs (30) ward (to make more representative of the patients population). The patients were asked to complete the questionnaire anonymously and for those who couldn't read, the patient party who could do so were asked to read for their patients and tick on the answer chosen by the patients. For the illiterate patients and party both, the questions were asked in personal by ourselves concealing the identity. Furthermore, they were also assured that their responses would not be seen by the students and would not effect their training in any way. The questionnaire were completed in the ward and recollected on the same day or the next day. Then, coding of collected data was done with numbers and coded data were entered in Microsoft Excel 97 and coded data was analyzed by SPSS ver 10.01 (Statistical Package for Social Studies).

The questionnaire was a kind of check list with a dichotomous rating scales (yes or no) which was relatively simple to construct, easy for respondents and fairly reliable<sup>4</sup>. The questionnaire consisted of 11 unambiguously positive and 11 unambiguously negative statements. Actually each positive statement was also asked negatively without changing the main concept or meaning so that biasness (regarding tendency to say "yes") could be reduced, presuming that there could be different response to two different statements carrying same concepts but with positive and negative sense because, some people like to answer "yes" to almost every statements or questions even to those items with which they disagree. Therefore, to suppress this both positive and negative statements were interspersed in random fashion<sup>6</sup>. For example; Statement #.1 "I am glad that there are student doctors in this hospital" was asked again in Statement #. 8 "I would have preferred there to be no students doctors in the hospital". The respondents were asked to identify the statement as True or False.



The total responds to the different statements as true or false were calculate in percentages and also the significant difference in findings of the two oppositely asked statements were also be assessed by using chi-square test and t-test to compute the p value.

The questionnaires also contained 10 adjectives regarding the patients' perceptions of the student doctor which the patient were asked to choose. Other characteristics such as age, sex, address, duration of stay, number of admission, education status were also included. These mentioned characteristics were again divided into two different groups for further cross analysis and within group comparison study like; age wise,  $\leq$  or  $>$  mean age; sex – male or female; address wise – from Kathmandu valley or outside the valley; duration of stay wise,  $\leq$  or  $>$  mean stay; number of admission – 1<sup>st</sup> time or  $\geq 2$  times admission; and lastly education status wise – illiterate or can read and write or SLC and above. Again the chi-square test and t-test were the tools to compute the p value.

### **Findings (Result):**

A total of 90 patients (90%) returned completed questionnaire. Their **Mean Age** was 37.79 yrs (standard deviation = 18.95 yrs, range = 13 - 89 yrs). 45.6% were **Male** and 54.4% were **Female**. 45.6% of the patients were from **Kathmandu Valley** and 45.6% were from **Outside the Valley** however, 8.9% didn't respond their address. Their mean **Duration of Stay** was 14.68 days (range = 1 – 150 days) and 72% of the patients stayed for  $\leq 15$  days while 28% stayed for  $> 15$  days. 68.9% were admitted for the **First Time** and 30% were admitted for **Two or more than Two Times**. As for the **Education Status**, 13.2% were illiterate, 37.8% could read and write. 46.7% were literate (i.e.; SLC or above).

Among the total of 90 patients 82.2% (74) knew that there were **Student Doctors** in TUTH. Remaining 17.8% didn't know the fact. The patients with higher education status were found to know that there were students doctors ( $P = 0.0103$ ) but the factors like number of admission and duration of stay didn't made much difference to this fact ( $P = 0.3160/ P = 0.856$ ).

The percentage of the patients endorsing each of the 22 questionnaire items as either true or false is show in Table 1 below;

Sr.	Statement	True (%)	False (%)	Significant Diff <sup>a</sup> with Opposite Statement
1.	I am glad that there are students doctors in the hospital.	85.1	12.2	NS (with S <sub>8</sub> )
2.	Because of the student doctors being around, you feel more in touch what is going on about your disease.	82.4	16.2	*** (with S <sub>18</sub> )
3.	Student doctors don't know anything about your disease.	33.8	63.5	*** (with S <sub>21</sub> )
4.	Student doctors don't take an interest in patients.	23	75.7	* (with S <sub>9</sub> )
5.	Student doctors have good behavior and temperament.	95.9	4.1	NS (with S <sub>10</sub> )
6.	Student doctors are busy and always in hurry.	59.5	37.8	** (with S <sub>15</sub> )
7.	You can ask student doctors the most trivial questions.	93.2	6.8	*** (with S <sub>16</sub> )
8.	I would have preferred there to be no student doctors in the hospital	16.2	81.1	NS (with S <sub>1</sub> )
9.	Student doctors do take an interest in patients	90.5	8.1	* (with S <sub>4</sub> )
10.	Student doctors behave badly to the patients.	8.1	91.9	NS (with S <sub>5</sub> )
11.	You also get to learn something while the senior doctors are teaching student doctors in your presence.	89.2	10.8	** (with S <sub>20</sub> )
12.	You didn't really benefit from student doctors on your treatment process.	31.1	66.2	** (with S <sub>19</sub> )
13.	You like student doctors asking you're every detail and personal questions concerning your disease.	91.9	8.1	*** (with S <sub>22</sub> )
14.	You don't like student doctors examining you repeatedly taking a long time.	37.8	60.8	NS (with S <sub>17</sub> )
15.	Student doctors have more time to give.	60.8	37.8	** (with S <sub>6</sub> )
16.	There is no point asking question to student doctors since they don't know anything.	35.1	63.5	*** (with S <sub>7</sub> )
17.	You like student doctors examine you because they do it in detail.	67.6	29.7	NS (with S <sub>14</sub> )
18.	Although student doctors being around, you didn't get much to know about your disease or problem.	43.2	55.4	*** (with S <sub>2</sub> )
19.	Student doctors helped very much in your treatment process.	87.8	12.2	** (with S <sub>12</sub> )
20.	When student doctors are being taught in your presence, you rather feel left out or bored.	27.0	68.9	** (with S <sub>11</sub> )
21.	Student doctors also know about your disease.	89.2	9.5	*** (with S <sub>3</sub> )
22.	You don't like student doctors asking you personal questions regarding your disease.	41.9	51.4	*** (with S <sub>13</sub> )

**Note:** NS = Not Significant  
 \* = Significant at the 5% Level ( $p < 0.05$ )  
 \*\* = Significant at 1% Level ( $p < 0.01$ )  
 \*\*\* = Significant at 0.1% Level ( $p < 0.001$ )

The percentages are for those patients who know there are students doctors in the hospital.  
 (n = 74)



Among the 10 adjectives to choose, 75.7% of patients found that student doctors are **friendly** and other characteristics they choose were (in descending order): **Helpful** (63.5%), **Polite** (58.1%), **Sympathetic** (58.1%), **Indiscriminate** (54.1%), **Clean and tidy** (50%). The features they found less in student doctors were Carefulness (43.2%), Kind (41.9%), Gentle (33.8%) and Respectable (32.4%).

60% of the patients found the statement "*student doctors are busy and always in hurry*" as true. There was no significant difference in responses of two different group of age, sex, address, duration of stay except that slight majority of the patients with higher education status (54%) prevailed that the statement was false. ( $p = 0.007$ )

42.7% of the patients (out of which 79% were female) preferred female student doctors for their examination and 34.8% of the patients (among which 71% were male) preferred male student doctors. 19.1% of the patients responded to both student doctors (among this 53% were female patients and 47% were male patients).

Although both groups of the patients seems to have positive attitude towards student doctors the patients admitted for the first time had more positive attitude in comparison to patients admitted for two or more than two times in the hospital. However, the patients admitted two or more than two times, do not hesitate to answer the personal questions, regarding their diseases in comparison to the patients admitted for the first time ( $p = 0.005$ ).

There was a significant finding that the younger age patients ( $\leq 30$  yrs) do not like the student doctors asking them all detail and personal questions regarding the diseases in comparison to the older age group ( $p = 0.006$ ) but both the age group seems to have positive attitude in other statements.

Sexwise and addresswise, there was no much difference in attitude to student doctors. Both groups of patients in both entities had highly positive attitudes.

According to the duration of stay, patients with longer duration of stay ( $> 15$  days) had less positive attitude than patients with shorter duration of stay ( $\leq 15$  days).



## Discussion:

The result of this survey showed that the attitude of patients towards student doctors who had been involved in their care during their hospital stay were, on the whole, highly favorable. There was a consistently positive attitude towards the presence of students doctors in the hospital, good behavior and temperament of student doctor and examination of patient in detail. For these statements, there was no significant difference with the finding of the statements which were negatively asked. Furthermore, other statements about the patients ability to ask question to the student doctors, student doctors' interest in patients, patients willingness to answer their personal questions and every detail concerning disease, student doctors' help in the treatment process, student doctors also knowing about the disease and the presence of student doctors making them feel in touch with their disease, have also highly positive responses. However there was significant difference with the findings of their respective negatively asked questions, though these negative statements were also responded in positive manner. These significant difference in findings of positive or negative statements could be due to reasons; 1) The response could be different for the statement, which are put forwarded in different manners but with the same concept. 2) The patients did not understand the theme of the statement and responded without knowing correctly. 3) There are few missing values in the total percentage of the response that could be due to either dilemma for choosing true or false or could be that the patients didn't like the statement and did not response. 4) Tendency to answer "yes" to every statement<sup>6</sup>. 5) Tendency to lie i.e; faking answer by respondents<sup>6</sup>. 6) Social desirability<sup>6</sup>. The only patients negative attitude to the student doctors was that the student doctors are always busy and in hurry (60%). Only educated patients found to understand that the student doctors are not always in hurry and busy. The adjectives most consistently used to characterize student doctors were friendly, helpful, polite, sympathetic and indiscriminating. Factors like age, sex and address (valley or outside valley) didn't appear to have much influence on attitude towards student doctors though the factor like number of admission and duration of stay made some difference i.e.; patients admitted for the first time and group of patients with shorter duration of stay seem to have fairly more positive attitudes. The significant number of younger patients ( $\leq 30$  yrs) didn't like student doctors asking them all detail and personal questions regarding the diseases. Most of the patients wanted to be examined by the student doctors of the their own sex.

The limitations of this study are; 1) The small size of sample on which it is based. Among the total of 90 returned sample (response rate 90%), 16 were discarded to R/O sample error, their response might not be reliable because they didn't know that the student doctors were in the hospital and they came for their service, i.e; they could not recognize them. Therefore, remaining 74 patient' were only considered for analysis. The limitation of small size sample is perhaps partly offset by the high degree of consistency in the response. The low response rate could have resulted in a bias if the attitudes of non-respondents were systematically different from these completing the questionnaire. Nevertheless, first response rate of  $> 60\%$  is generally regarded as very good in survey research.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, a sample size of  $>30$  is considered as large enough for statistical purpose.<sup>5</sup> 2) The disproportionate number of patients especially in the groups of patients who were admitted for the first time and the patients who stayed for shorter duration,



might have introduced a bias towards more positive attitudes, so that the observed proportions of positive attitudes of the patients who were repeatedly admitted and stayed for longer duration might be an underestimate of the true figure. 3) There could be possible disadvantage in the survey concerning the veracity of the opinions expressed. Patients may experience a sense of obligation to those who cared for them, including the student doctor and may be reluctant to express negative feelings, which might create difficulties for their future interaction with staff at hospital (social desirability). An attempt was made to minimize these potential source of bias by emphasizing the anonymity of the replies, concealing the identity of investigator (disguising is an unobtrusive indicator of attitudes and behavior<sup>6</sup>) and by the independence of the main investigation from the hospital team.

Finally to the conclusion, attitudes are not learnt from text books, they are acquired by social interaction and it has been truly said that attitudes are caught and not taught<sup>7</sup>. On balance, we think we have shown that most patients in our study had caught highly favorable attitudes towards the student doctors who shared in their care during their hospital stay in TUTH.

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# ANNEX



## बमस्कार,

यहाँका विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरु बारे तपाईंहरुको विचार संकलन गर्नका लागि गरिएको यो एउटा सानो खोजपत्र मात्र हो । यहाँ तपाईंको आफ्नो व्यक्तिगत विचार ठीक वा बेठीकको रूपमा राख्नुहोला । तपाईंको यो विचार सबै गोप्य रहनेछ र यसले यहाँका विद्यार्थीलाई कुनै हानि गर्नेदैन ।

कृपया तलको वाक्यहरु पढ्नुहोला अनि तपाईंलाई सो वाक्य ठीक लागेमा ठीक  कीठामा ✓ चिन्ह लगाउनु होला र बेठीक लागेमा बेठीक  कीठामा ✓ चिन्ह लगाउनु होला ।

- |    |   |  |  |
|----|---|--|--|
| क) | के तपाईंलाई थाहा छ, यस अस्पतालमा विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरु पनि तपाईंको सेवामा आउछेन् ? | थाहा छ <input type="checkbox"/>                  | थाहा छैन <input type="checkbox"/>                |
| ख) | अहिलेसम्म तपाईं कति चोटि यस अस्पतालमा भर्ना हुनु भएको छ ?                         | पहिलो पल्ट <input type="checkbox"/>              | २ वा २ भन्दा बढी <input type="checkbox"/>        |
| ग) | तपाईंलाई कुन डाक्टरले जाँचेको मनपर्छ ?  | महिला विद्यार्थी डाक्टर <input type="checkbox"/> | पुरुष विद्यार्थी डाक्टर <input type="checkbox"/> |

नं.	वाक्य	तपाईंको विचार	
१)	यो अस्पतालमा विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरु भएको मलाई राम्रो लागेको छ ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
२)	विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरु आफ्नो वरिपरि भएको बेला आफ्नो रोगबारे भइरहेको कुराहरु थाहा पाउन सकिन्छ ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
३)	तपाईंको रोगबारे विद्यार्थी डाक्टरलाई कुनै ज्ञान हुँदैन ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
४)	विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरुले विरामीबारे त्यति ध्यान दिँदैनन् ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
५)	विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरुको स्वभाव र आचरण राम्रो छ ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
६)	विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरु सधैँ व्यस्त तथा हतारमा हुन्छन् ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
७)	तपाईं विद्यार्थी डाक्टरलाई आफ्नो मनमा लागेको सानो प्रश्न समेत गर्न सक्नुहुन्छ ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
८)	यो अस्पतालमा विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरु नभएको भए राम्रो हुन्थ्यो ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
९)	विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरुले विरामीबारे राम्ररी चाख लिएर काम गर्छन् ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
१०)	विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरु विरामीलाई नराम्रो व्यवहार गर्छन् ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
११)	ठूला डाक्टरले विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरुलाई तपाईं कै अगाडि पढाउँदा त्यसबाट तपाईंले पनि केहि कुरा सिक्नुहुन्छ ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
१२)	विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरुबाट तपाईंको उपचार क्रममा केहि फाइदा भएन ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>

नं.	वाक्य	तपाइको विचार	
१३)	तपाईंलाई विद्यार्थी डाक्टरले आफ्नो रोगबारे सम्पूर्ण तथा व्यक्तिगत विवरण सोधेको राम्रो लाग्छ ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
१४)	तपाईंलाई विद्यार्थी डाक्टरले धेरै समय लगाइ घरिघरि जाँचेको मन पर्दैन ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
१५)	विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरूसंग विरामीको लागि दिने समय धेरै हुन्छ ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
१६)	विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरूलाई खासै त्यति राम्ररी थाहा नहुनेहुदाँ उनीहरूलाई प्रश्न सोध्नु फाइदा हुदैन ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
१७)	तपाईंलाई विद्यार्थी डाक्टरले जाँचेको ठीक लाग्छ, किनकी उनीहरूले विस्तृत रूपमा जाँच्छन् ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
१८)	विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरू आफ्नो बरिपरि भएपनि आफ्नो रोगबारे भइरहेको कुराहरू थाहा पाउन सकिएन ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
१९)	तपाईंको उपचार क्रममा विद्यार्थी डाक्टरले निकै मदत पुऱ्याएको छ ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
२०)	विद्यार्थी डाक्टरलाई तपाईं कै अघि पढाउँदा तपाईंलाई बेवास्ता गरेको जस्तो लाग्छ वा भर्को लाग्छ ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
२१)	विद्यार्थी डाक्टरलाई पनि तपाईंको रोगबारे ज्ञान हुन्छ ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
२२)	तपाईंलाई विद्यार्थी डाक्टरले आफ्नो रोगबाहेक व्यक्तिगत कुराहरू सोधेको मनपर्दैन ।	ठीक <input type="checkbox"/>	बेठीक <input type="checkbox"/>
२३)	तपाईंलाई विद्यार्थी डाक्टरहरूको व्यवहार कस्तो लाग्छ ? (एक वा एक भन्दा बढी कोठाहरूमा ✓ चिन्ह लगाउन सक्नुहुन्छ । )	मिलनसार दयालु होशियार मदतकारी (सहयोगी) भलाद्मी सफासुग्घर सहानुभूति दिने नरम बोली भएको आरदरणीय पक्षपात नगर्ने	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

तपाईंको : उमेर : \_\_\_\_\_ वर्ष  
लिंग : पुरुष  महिला   
ठेगाना : \_\_\_\_\_  
अस्पतालमा भर्ना भएको आज कति दिन भयो ? \_\_\_\_\_ दिन  
शैक्षिक योग्यता : १. पढेको छैन   
२. साधारण लेखपढ   
३. एस.एल.सी. वा सो भन्दा माथि