

Letters

To the Editors:

“General” knowledge of medical students

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I included a series of questions relating to the health services in an assessment of fifth year medical students (n=47). The assessment was done as a part of the continuous assessment carried out at the completion of a 2-month attachment in the University medical unit. Their performance in the medical domain was excellent, though ignorance of certain areas (bordering on “general knowledge”) was surprising, to say the least. Six relevant questions are given below, with the approximate percentages of correct answers.

- a) Name the Director of the National Hospital of Sri Lanka (NHSL): 32%
- b) Name the Director General of Health Services: 2%
- c) Name the Secretary of the Ministry Health: 0%

- d) Approximate bed strength of the NHSL (where they had worked for almost 2 1/2 years): 50%
- e) Approximate number of nurses in the ward (where they worked for 2 months): 43%
- f) The time slots for visitors to see patients: 6%

Discussing the assessment with colleagues, and the performance of students, have raised more questions than answers. Do medical students need “general” knowledge to be good doctors? Are the learning experiences encouraging students to acquire “general” knowledge? Or more interestingly, are the teachers as ignorant as their students?

By the way, do you know the answers?

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