Child Maltreatment between Knowledge, Attitude and Beliefs Among Saudi Pediatricians and Medical Students In A Teaching Hospital Setting

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Background: Child maltreatment is not included in many medical schools and pediatric residency curriculums, which might limit knowledge and spread misconceptions. Additionally, physicians might have different attitude regarding reporting child abuse and neglect. In this study, we hypothesize that medical students and pediatric trainees have limited knowledge, oblivious attitude and misbeliefs regarding child maltreatment in comparison to experienced pediatricians. But, medical students and trainees might hold higher motives and willingness to learn about child maltreatment and their consequences.

Methods: A self reported questionnaire was distributed after a pilot study to include pediatricians, pediatrics trainees and medical students in all main areas of pediatrics services: pediatrics wards, pediatrics outpatient clinics, critical care and pediatrics emergency.

Results: In disregard to their level of training, Saudi medical students and physicians believed child maltreatment happens within the kingdom and quite common. They were familiar with child maltreatment definition although only one third thought it is subject to culture sensitivity. However, experienced physicians were more knowledgeable especially about neglect. Moreover, female participants were more likely to report despite being more skeptical of readiness of Saudi law system to deal with cases of maltreatment. In general, all participants requested and were enthusiastic to receive further training.

Conclusion: Although Saudi medical students, pediatrics trainees and pediatricians have good basic knowledge, positive attitude and willingness to learn, they need further training especially in reporting CAN to provide safe environment for children in the young nation.