

**STUDY ON KNOWLEDGE TOWARDS THE DIFFERENT MEDICO-LEGAL TERMS  
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**ABSTRACT**

It is essential for an expert medical witness to have a fair knowledge of all the branches of medical science taught to a medical student in the course of studies. Lack of knowledge of the legal medicine and legal aspects of practice of medicine is important issue that needs to be addressed promptly.<sup>[1]</sup> This questionnaire-based project is carried out to study awareness towards the different medico-legal terms among doctors of private medical institute.

**INTRODUCTION**

Medical profession is governed by legislation and by a Code of Ethics and Etiquettes. Government has made laws related to the branch of medicine. Hence, it is important that doctor should be well aware about different kind of medico-legal terms, medical laws, functions of state medical council and Indian medical council and legal aspects of practice of medicine.<sup>[1]</sup>

**MATERIAL AND METHOD**

A prospective, cross-sectional, questionnaire-based study was carried out among doctors of NKP Salve Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre and Lata Mangeshkar Hospital, Nagpur from Nov. 2017 - April 2018. All doctors possessing MBBS degree and above were included for the study. They were selected by simple random sampling. Ethical clearance was obtained from Institutional Ethics Committee prior to the study. A validated questionnaire which covered various medico-legal terms, commonly encountered in the medical practice was given for all participants to check their knowledge. The questionnaire was pretested on a group

of 10 doctors who were excluded from the study and questionnaire was modified accordingly. The response was obtained from various levels of doctors including professor, associate professor, assistant professor, tutors, medical officers and residents belonging to various specialties of medicine. Total 120 questionnaires were distributed among doctors of various specialties out of which 100 responses were received within stipulated period. The informed consent was taken prior to the study. They were informed that this questionnaire is the part of study and they are free to accept or deny completing it. They were asked not to disclose their name and department. Received responses were evaluated. The results were tabulated and statistically analyzed.

**RESULT AND CONCLUSION**

The study was carried out among 120 doctors, out of which 100 (83.3%) responded positively. Following validated questionnaire was used to assess their knowledge towards various medico-legal terms:

1	Forensic medicine means: (a) Branch related with social issues. (b) Branch which deals with the application of medical knowledge to aid in the administration of justice. (c) No idea.
2	Medical ethics is: (a) Medical etiquette (b) Moral principles which guide members of medical profession in their dealings with each other, patients & state.

	(c) Medical law
3	Privileged Communication is: (a) Divulging professional secrecy (b) Communication to the patient about risk of treatment (c) No idea
4	Vicarious Liability is: (a) Responsibility of the manufacturer for the product. (b) Responsibility of a senior / employer for act of junior / employee. (c) No idea
5	The doctrine of Res Ipsa Loquitur is: (a) Things speak for it self (b) Things are located by doctor (c) No idea
6	Dichotomy means: (a) Covering (b) Fee splitting (c) No idea
7	Novus actus interveniens means: (a) The doctor is responsible for the negligent action as well for its consequences (b) Patients should seek & complete the treatment from one competent doctor (c) No idea
8	Professional death sentence denotes. (a) Capital punishment (b) Penal erasure from medical register (c) No idea
9	Medical jurisprudence deals with: (a) Legal aspect of practice of medicine (b) Legal responsibilities of a patient (c) No idea
10	Therapeutic privilege is: (a) It is authority to a doctor to treat a patients with any therapy (b) It is exception to the rule of full disclosure (c) No idea
11	Warning notice is: (a) A notice given to medical practitioner doing serious professional misconduct (b) A notice given to the patient in doctor patient relationship in disobedience of treatment (c) No idea
12	Following is the example of passive Euthanasia: (a) Turning off a respirator (b) Failure to resuscitate terminally ill patient (c) No idea
13	Res indicata means: (a) Time limit to file a suit against damages by doctor (b) Indicated strict bed rest to patient under treatment (c) No idea
14	Loco parentis means: (a) Local parents can not give consent in emergency (b) Consent taken from person-in-charge of child in absence of parent or guardians in an emergency (c) No idea
15	Do you think there is need for planning and conducting training programme related to legal aspects of practice of medicine? (a) Yes (b) No

The responses obtained differentially to the questionnaire was analyzed as follows:

Table No. 1.

Sr. No.	Que. No.	Answered correctly %	Answered wrong %	No Idea about the matter %
1.	1	97	1	2
2.	2	95	5	0
3.	3	35	51	19
4.	4	76	8	16
5.	5	73	12	15

As shown in table no 1 general knowledge about forensic medicine and medical ethics is known to 97%, and 95% of participants respectively. But it is poor to see that when tested knowledge about privileged communication, only

35% participants answered correctly, and answers of 51% participants was wrong. ( Fig. No. 1). Whereas 16% and 15% participants were not having idea about vicarious liability, and Doctrine of Res Ipsa Loquitor, respectively.

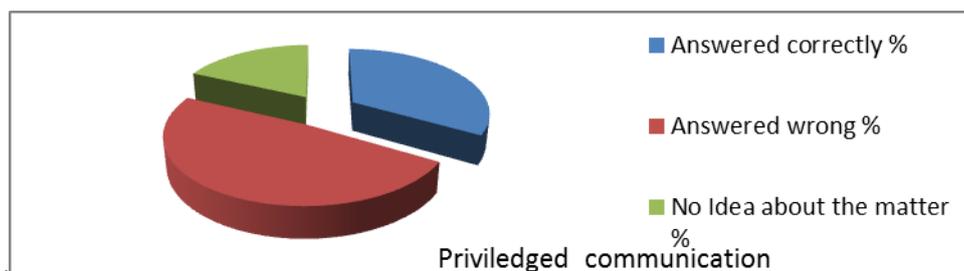


Fig. No. 1.

Table No 2.

Sr. No.	Que. No.	Answered correctly %	Answered wrong %	No Idea about the matter %
1.	6	8	73	19
2.	7	60	16	24
3.	8	9	77	14
4.	9	82	9	9
5.	10	38	50	14

As shown in table no. 2 once again it is poor to see that when tried to know about the term dichotomy only 8% of participants could answer correctly, 73% of participants were wrong and 19% of them withdrawn. Similarly when tried to know about the term professional death sentence only 9% of participants could answer correctly, 77% of participants were wrong and 14% of them withdrawn.

When tried to know about the term therapeutic privilege, only 38% participants answered correctly, and answers of 50% participants were wrong, and 14% were unaware about it. The correct answer for novus actus interveniens was given by 60% of participant, and that for medical jurisprudence was given by 82%.

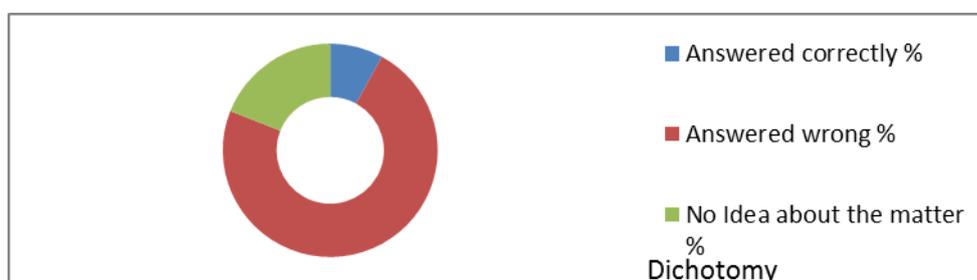


Fig. no. 2.

Table no. 3.

Sr. No.	Que. No.	Answered correctly %	Answered wrong %	No Idea about the matter %
1.	11	72	19	9
2.	12	44	46	8
3.	13	50	12	38
4.	14	5	76	19

As shown in table no 3, extremely poor condition observed for the term loco parentis which is consent taken from person-in-charge of child in absence of parent or guardians in an emergency, only 5% participants know this term. Whereas knowledge about warning notice is known to 72%, of participants.

When concluded asking the need for planning and conducting training programme related to legal aspects of practice of medicine, 94% of them urged on the same need.

## DISCUSSION

Lack of knowledge may be due to several reasons like not enough time spent on acquiring knowledge of legal aspects of practice of medicine, only exam base study etc. Forensic medicine is a practical subject, class lectures should therefore, be illustrated with practical examples and students should get ample opportunities to observe and discuss cases of varied magnitude.<sup>[3]</sup>

In our study 83.3% participants responded voluntarily, but it was 100% in study by Anil Haripriya and Vibha Haripriya.<sup>[2]</sup> AS well, general knowledge about forensic medicine and medical ethics is known to 97%, and 95% of participants respectively, but it was 100% in the study by Ketan L. Chavda *et al.*<sup>[1]</sup>

Unfortunately about privileged communication, only 35% participants are correct whereas answers of 77.5 % participants were correct in the study by Ketan L. Chavda *et al.* In our study 76% and 73% participants are having idea about vicarious liability, and Doctrine of Res Ipsa Loquitur, whereas 72.5 % and 62.5% participants were having idea respectively in the study by Ketan L. Chavda *et al.*<sup>[1]</sup>

About the term dichotomy only 8% of participants could answer correctly. The term professional death sentence only 9% of participants could answer correctly. Similarly about the term therapeutic privilege, only 38% participants answered correctly. The correct answer for novus actus interveniens was given by 60% of participant, and that for medical jurisprudence was given by 82%.

It is extremely poor condition that the term loco parentis which is supposed to be known to every practitioner, only 5% participants are correct. Whereas less than 50% participants are correct about passive euthanasia and res indicata. Knowledge about warning notice is known to 72% of participants.

According to our study 94% of the participants urged on the need of planning and conducting training programme related to legal aspects of practice of medicine, the urge is 98% in the study by Ketan L. Chavda *et al.*<sup>[1]</sup>

Hence, curriculum regarding horizontal and vertical integration of this branch shall be done in undergraduate

curriculum and sufficient Forensic Medicine faculty shall be recruited to handle and teach medico-legal aspects.

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