



**A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON 2<sup>nd</sup> YEAR SYNDROME AMONG DENTAL MEDICAL AND NURSING STUDENTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome otherwise called as medical students' disease is a condition often reported in medical students who often perceive themselves to be experiencing the symptoms of the disease that they are studying. A study is done through a survey to assess the presence and awareness of the disease in students studying in dental, medical and nursing courses. The main aim of the study is to create awareness among students about 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome.

**Key words:**

2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome, students, disease, study, psychology

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**INTRODUCTION**

The main objective of this research was to create awareness about 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome among the student population. 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome is otherwise called as medical students' disease is a condition often reported in medical students who perceive themselves to be experiencing the symptoms of the disease they are studying. It is a form of acute hypochondriasis. This syndrome is mainly found in students studying medicine. This study is conducted using medical, dental and nursing students to find out whether the area of study in the various medical fields affects the prevalence of the syndrome and whether the syndrome affects the students in a different way according to their area of study.

A study conducted by Dr. Oliver Howes and Dr. Paul Salkovskis found that 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome was prevalent in 70% of the student population studying medicine. In their second study they found that 79% of the medical students they had chosen for their study had demonstrated a history of 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome<sup>(6)</sup>. This shows that this syndrome can not only affect a student more than once but it also shows that more than half of the people who experienced this syndrome have experienced this before. Another study conducted by Dr. G. Singh and colleagues which was published in 2004 examined whether being at a medical school causes anxiety and worry in students. They used a total of 449 medical

students and 485 non-medical students across four years of study and their health anxiety was evaluated using the Health Anxiety Questionnaire. They found no evidence to prove that medical school causes more anxiety and fear. In fact, it was found that the anxiety levels of medical students were lower compared to non-medical students<sup>(5)</sup>. In a study conducted by Dr. Ingrid Candel and Dr. Harald Merckelbach it was found that gender and age were not significant predictors of MSS but, both thought suppression and fantasy proneness strongly predicted MSS complaints<sup>(4)</sup>. In the present study that was conducted a 123 students were made to take an online survey with questions regarding 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome.

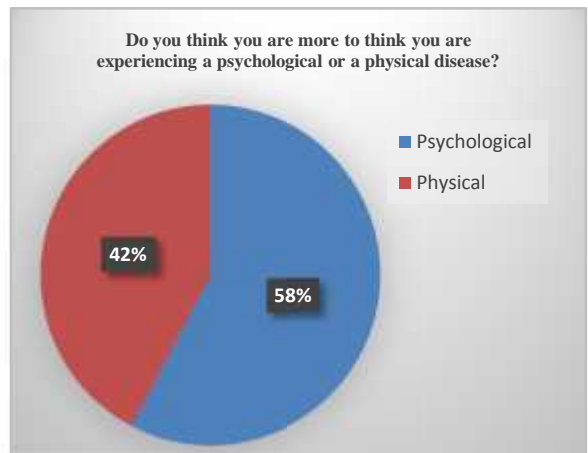
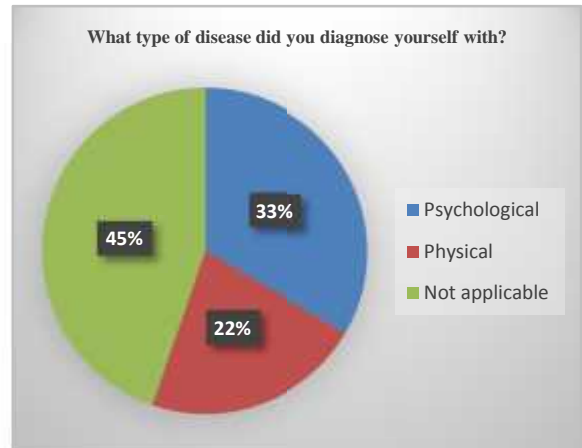
**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

A survey was conducted online using survey planet and the data collected was statistically analysed. The survey contains 14 questions and the field of study was taken as the main criteria. The survey was evenly distributed among 123 medical, dental and nursing students. The questions included in the survey are

1. Which medical field do you belong to?
2. Are you aware of what 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome or medical students' disease is?
3. 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome is when students studying in medical fields perceive themselves to be experiencing the symptoms of the disease they are studying. Have you ever experienced this?
4. If you have experienced this, what type of disease did you diagnose yourself with?

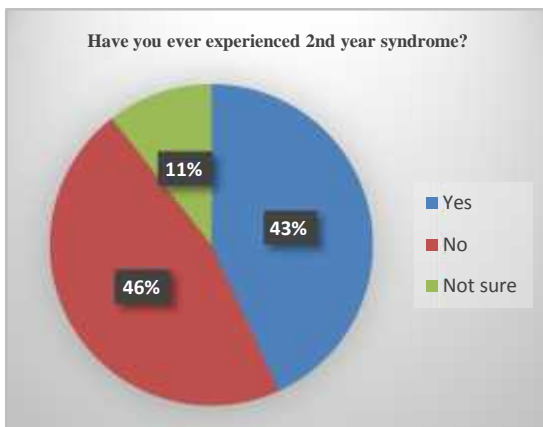
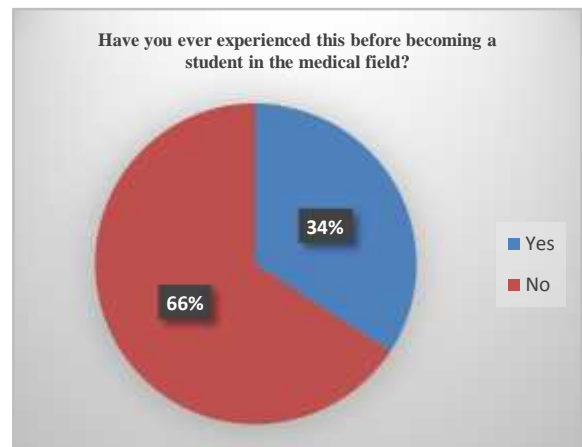
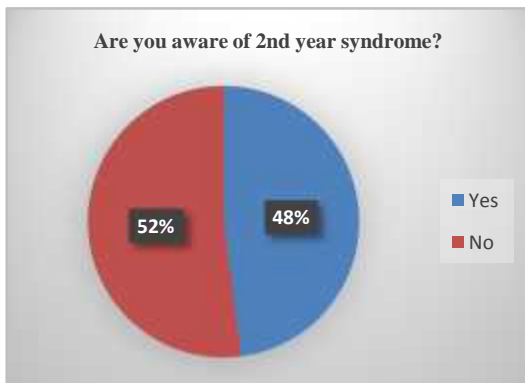
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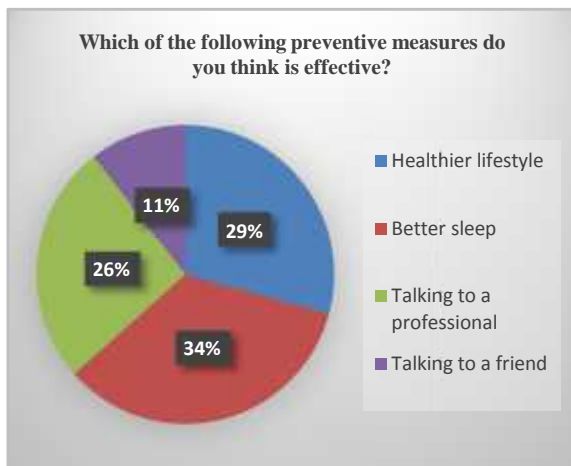
5. Have you ever diagnosed yourself correctly?
6. What is the name of the particular disease you thought you had contradicted?
7. Do you think you are more prone to think you are experiencing the symptoms of a psychological disease or a physical one?
8. Do you think 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome can be written off as a phase in a medical students life or do you think it should be taken more seriously?
9. How do you think this affects a person?
10. Which of the following preventive measures do you think is most effective? Healthier lifestyle, better sleep, talking to a professional or talking to a friend?
11. Have you ever experienced this before becoming a student in the medical field?
12. Have you ever diagnosed yourself using the internet before becoming a medical student?
13. If you have, do you think that because you are used to self-diagnosis that you are more prone to have 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome?
14. Do you think 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome plays a major role in a medical students life?



## DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The survey was taken by a total of 123 students. There were 41 students taken for each medical field. It was found that almost half of the students were unaware of 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome. It was also found that 43.1% had experienced this syndrome. It was also found that the most common diagnosis was depression followed by anxiety. The results of the survey are represented in the form of graphs below





The survey consisted of 14 questions and the medical field was taken as the main criteria. It was found that 52% of the students were only aware of 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome, the remaining 48% were completely unaware of it. It was also found that 43% of the students had experienced 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome before out of which most of them had diagnosed themselves with a psychological disease. The most commonly reported diagnosis was anxiety and panic attacks. More than half of the students thought they were more prone to diagnosing themselves with a psychological disease compared to a physical one. Almost 70% of the students felt that 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome should be taken more seriously rather than being written off as a phase in a medical student's life. 69 students felt 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome created better doctors who diagnosed better. Students felt that better sleep was the most effective preventive measure for 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome. 56 students felt that second year syndrome was a major part of a medical student's life.

Second year syndrome is one such condition that is frequently reported in medical trainees that experience the symptoms of the disease they are studying. In a review done by Dr. Brian Hodges, he noted that medical student syndrome (MSS) was first reported in the 1960s.

In a study conducted by Dr. M. Hardy and Dr. L. Calhoun they investigated psychological distress and MSS in students studying abnormal psychology. The study found that students studying psychology were more worried about their psychological health compared to students who didn't study psychology. The authors also claimed that the students that learned about various psychological disorders demonstrated decreased anxiety about their own mental health, and increased likelihood of seeking out mental health services on the university campus for personal psychological distress<sup>(8)</sup>. This study was conducted on psychology students while the present study was conducted using medical, dental and nursing students. The results obtained by both studies were slightly similar although the study conducted by Dr. Hardy and Dr. Calhoun revolved around psychological health.

The study conducted by Dr. Oliver Howes and Dr. Paul Salkovskis showed close results to the present study. Their study showed higher percentages compared to the present study. The study conducted by Dr. G. Singh and his colleagues focused on the comparison between medical and non-medical students. Their study found that medical students seemed less anxious compared to non-medical students<sup>(5)</sup>. In

Dr. Ingrid Candel and Dr. Harald Merckelbach's study they found that suppression and fantasy proneness were leading factors for MSS<sup>(4)</sup>. This seemed in accordance with the results of the present study on the behaviour and thoughts of the students surveyed.

Taken as a whole, the results of studies to date appear to be very mixed as to whether students are more prone to suffering hypochondria-like conditions related to the subjects they are studying. Even if the rates of hypochondria are higher in medical, dental and nursing students, it might be that these students seek out such courses because of pre-existing conditions they have or think they have. More research with bigger samples, better control groups, and better control for pre-existing medical problems are warranted as there does appear to be some evidence that such conditions exist even if there may be good explanations as to why.

## CONCLUSION

The comparative study is on 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome among medical, dental and nursing students. It was found that only half of the students were actually aware of 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome. 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome is a disease by which students studying in the medical field perceive themselves to be experiencing the symptoms of the disease they are studying. The main objective of this research is to create awareness about 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome among the student population. The present study will also be useful in finding research on 2<sup>nd</sup> year syndrome.

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