



Original Research Article

PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS FAMILY ADOPTION PROGRAMME AMONGST MEDICAL UNDERGRADUATES IN WESTERN MAHARASHTRA

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ABSTRACT

Background: The family adoption program in MBBS is an innovative initiative introduced in medical education in India. With its emphasis on patient-centred care and holistic understanding, this program seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. In this program, medical students are assigned to adopt a patient's family, immersing themselves in the patient's social and cultural context. By forming a bond with the adopted family, students gain valuable insights into the psychosocial aspects of patient care, communication skills, and empathy development. This program aims to equip future doctors with a deeper understanding of the patient experience and enhance their ability to deliver compassionate and effective healthcare.

Objectives: To assess the current knowledge, attitude and practices of Family adoption programme in CBME Curriculum among medical undergraduates in the Department of Community Medicine.

Materials and Methods: The target population consists of medical undergraduates from a medical college in Western Maharashtra. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who were currently enrolled in the 1st year of MBBS Batch of 2022. Sample size- 122 returned questionnaires in a batch of 150 students. A pre-structured questionnaire was used to collect data on participants' perceptions of family adoption programs using Google forms. Qualitative analysis using Thematic analysis was used to summarize the qualitative data obtained from open & closed-ended questions. Use of tables & charts is done to represent the relevant data.

Results: Of the 150 students, 122 responses were completely obtained. The ratio of Female: Male participants was almost similar. Most students had various complaints with the programme design which is explained in open-ended questions in the questionnaire.

Conclusion: The Family Adoption Programme has shown promise as an effective tool to enhance community-based medical education, bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical exposure to rural health. The thematic analysis of this study highlights its positive impact on students' communication skills, empathy, and understanding of the socio-cultural determinants of health. However, challenges such as inadequate resources, faculty shortages, and logistical barriers continue to hinder its uniform implementation. Addressing these challenges through strategic planning, improved infrastructure, and faculty support is essential to sustain and scale the FAP. With collaborative efforts and continued evaluation, the FAP can become an integral component of competency-based medical education in India, contributing to the training of socially accountable and community-oriented medical professionals.

Keywords: Family adoption programme, MBBS Students, CBME, undergraduate medical education, community medicine.

INTRODUCTION

The family adoption program (FAP) in MBBS is an innovative initiative introduced in medical education in India. In this program, medical students are assigned to adopt a patient's family, immersing themselves in the patient's social and cultural context. By forming a bond with the adopted family, students gain valuable insights into the psychosocial aspects of patient care, communication skills, and empathy development. This program aims to equip future doctors with a deeper understanding of the patient experience and enhance their ability to deliver compassionate and effective healthcare.^[2] Along with the said advantages, it fosters cultural competence and awareness. However, challenges such as resource constraints, faculty resistance, and limited availability of suitable families may hinder effective implementation. Hence, careful planning, adequate support, and continuous evaluation are crucial to address these concerns and maximize the program's benefits.^[4,5]

Aim and objectives: To assess the current knowledge, attitude and practices of Family adoption programme in the CBME Curriculum among 1st year medical undergraduates.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This qualitative study was conducted in August 2023 in a Medical College in Western Maharashtra. In a batch of 122 students chosen purposively comprising of students enrolled in the 1st year of MBBS Batch of 2022. The participants who agreed to be part of the study were included. After obtaining ethical clearance from the ethics committee of the institute, a questionnaire based on a pre-structured interview was developed and verified among experts and then distributed to the students who were already allotted their families in the respected villages for adoption. Out of the total 22 questions, there were 11 questions that judged the impact of this programme, 2 questions showing the challenges faced during Family adoption and 7 improvement/ suggestions questions.

A total of 122 responses were completed and returned. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and open-ended questions regarding the Family adoption programme. All the questions of the interview were transcribed. All the lines or parts of lines contributing to the research question were marked as codes. The codes were then categorized under various themes. The coding and thematic analysis were done manually.

Statistical Analysis: The responses received were entered manually in MS Excel 365. The data was analysed using Qualitative data analysis under which Thematic analysis was briefly done by using deductive approach that was based upon the reflection of the participants and then the final inferences were made.

RESULTS

A total of 122 undergraduate students participated in this study. 119 out of 122 students were aware of the newly introduced Family Adoption Program (FAP) as part of the Competency Based Medical Education system. The understanding of this programme was Limited in 10 students, comprehensive to 25 students and rest 87 of them had a moderate understanding. Most of the students (116) felt that they personally observed any positive impact of this programme, only 6 of them disagreed to it. 95.9% of them believed that students in all medical colleges across India should be exposed to a program like this. Further responses were thematically analysed for analysis. The themes were created as follows:

Impact 1: Potential benefits of incorporating a family adoption program into the MBBS curriculum? (Figure 1)

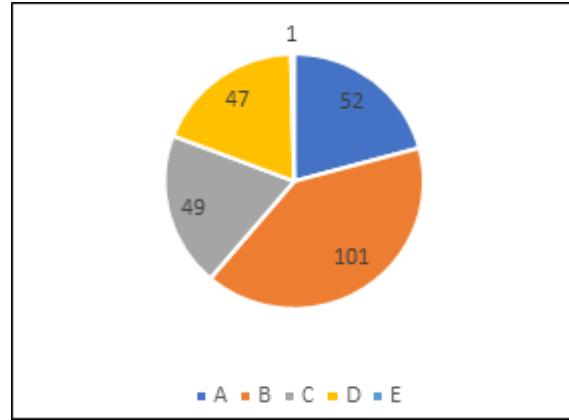


Figure 1: No. of students who believed in

- A: improved patient empathy & understanding
- B: enhanced communication skills as students
- C: better understanding of psychological aspects of students
- D: increased awareness of patients social/cultural backgrounds
- E: Increased theoretical practice

Impact 2: Do you think the family adoption program can enhance your understanding of patient-centred care? Why or why not? (Figure 2)

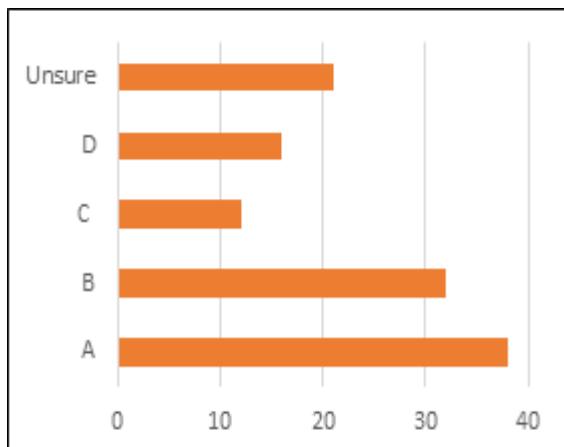


Figure 2: No. of students who agreed that FAP could enhance patient care

- A: increased communication with patients, increased skills
- B: understanding of community/ rural population/ psychology of pts/ their perspective
- C: Family discusses medical as well as personal problems more comfortably at their home comfort.
- D: helps learning various s/s, Rx, diseases, Disorders/ provides early clinical exposure/community exposure/primary health care to susceptible rural population

Impact 3: Have you personally observed any positive impact of the family adoption program? If yes, could you provide specific examples? (Figure 3)

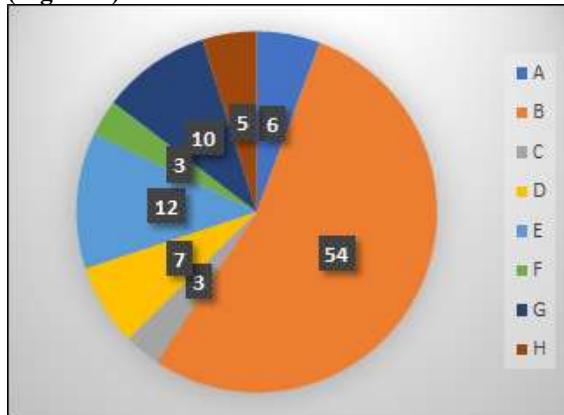


Table 1: Other positive impacts of the Family Adoption Program upon MBBS undergraduates

Sr. No.	Other Impacts of FAP	Responses (Yes) (%)
1	Did FAP influence your decision to serve rural population in future?	112 (91.8)
2	Does it help improve communication skills among students?	122 (100)
3	Does it help understand the common conditions in rural areas?	121 (99)
4	Does it provide opportunity for medical student to interact first hand?	121 (99)
5	Does it create awareness & understanding regarding rural health?	120 (98.3)
6	Does it help understanding factors influencing rural health?	120 (98.3)
7	Does it help students in team building?	113 (92.6)

Theme 2: Challenges faced by the students

Despite its considerable educational merit, the Family Adoption Program (FAP) is constrained by several implementation challenges as reported by participating students: a majority (63.1%) cited time constraints within the curriculum as a key obstacle,

Figure 3: No. of students who observed positive impact of FAP

- A: Healthcare provided to family at once
- B: Students learn clinical/Community skills/ Improved communication skills with patients
- C: Families perspective of junior doctors/medical students
- D: Openness of families with the students about their personal problems
- E: Knowledge of various schemes/services provided by the parent hospital
- F: Opportunity to interact with rural population/understanding the views of rural population
- G: Building doctor-patient relationship/ trust/ compliance of patients
- H: Understanding common diseases in community & its treatment

The Family Adoption Program (FAP) has demonstrably enriched medical education by immersing students in the realities of rural health and fostering critical soft skills. According to our survey of student responses, 100% agreed that FAP enhanced communication skills, while nearly all, 99%, found it improved their understanding of common rural conditions and provided valuable firsthand interaction with communities. A similarly high proportion (98.3%) reported heightened awareness and understanding of rural health issues and the factors influencing them; 91.8% said FAP influenced their intention to serve rural populations; and 92.6% felt it supported team-building. Collectively, these findings affirm FAP's role in bridging classroom learning with community engagement—shaping empathetic, communicative, and socially conscious future physicians. [Table 1]

while 35.2% each identified lack of resources or funding and limited availability of suitable adoptable families. Institutional resistance emerged as a barrier for 11.5% of respondents, and much smaller proportions pointed to difficulties such as regional language communication (2.5%), insufficient

knowledge among first-year students (under 1%), and unresponsive family behaviour (1.6%). These findings underscore that while FAP holds substantial promise for enhancing community-oriented medical

training, its broader effectiveness and scalability depend critically on addressing these logistical, institutional, and contextual constraints. [Table 2]

Table 2: Obstacles foreseen in implementing the family adoption program effectively

Challenges/ Obstacles	Responded yes (%)
Lack of resources or funding	43 (35.24)
Resistance from faculty members or administration	14 (11.5)
Limited availability of suitable families for adoption	43 (35.24)
Time constraints within the curriculum	77 (63.11)
Difficulty communicating in regional language	3 (2.45)
Lack of knowledge as 1st year students	1 (<1)
Unresponsive family behaviour	2 (1.6)
Understanding of cultural factors in health & disease	110 (90.16%)

Theme 3: Improvement or suggestions provided by the students

Suggestion 1: How can the medical faculty/staff support the successful integration of the family adoption program into the MBBS curriculum? (Figure 4)

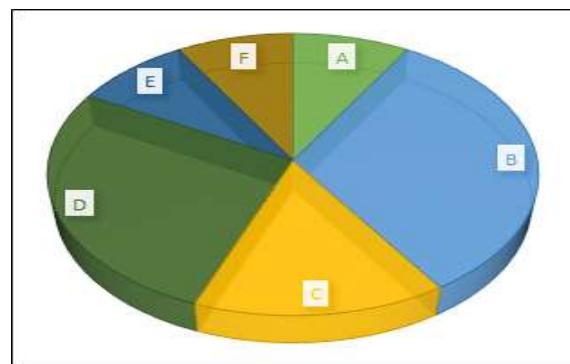


Figure 4: Responses to improvement in FAP by the medical faculty & staff

- A: Improve unresponsiveness by families/ introduce the students to family
- B: More trained faculty/doctors to accompany the visit
- C: Train to ask relevant questions to families/guidance for FAP
- D: Provide updated basic equipment / Instruments & teach their use/ information about schemes in hospital
- E: Be more student friendly, spend more time with us in field
- F: Help remove language barrier/ organize camps & show demonstration of treatment

Suggestion 2: Are there any specific resources or training needs that you believe would be helpful for faculty members involved in the family adoption program? (Figure 5)

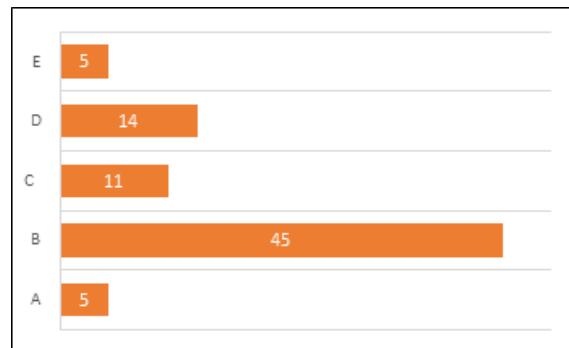


Figure 5: Responses to improvement in training needs for faculty

- A: Introduce students to families to gain trust in them & co-operate.
- B: Increase no. of visits/ interaction time/ no. of families
- C: Teach theoretical aspect in advance in classroom along with practical use of instruments/ equipments
- D: Increase the duration of programme/ arrange camps/ arrange faculty/nurses
- E: Monitor the programme effectiveness/ increase attendance rate during visits

Suggestion 3: Based on your experience, what recommendations would you make to enhance the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the family adoption program in MBBS? (Figure 6)

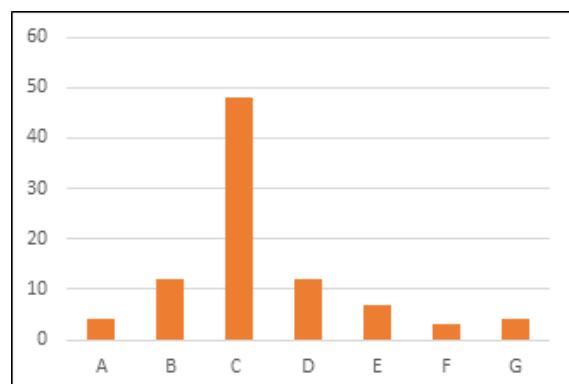


Figure 6: Recommendations to enhance effectiveness of FAP

- A: Visits should not be frequent as there is less time to study in 1st MBBS
- B: Brief elaborately about the day's activity prior to visits & inform various common diseases/disorders/health related events in community
- C: Provide more time with community, increase no. of students in a group, give training.
- D: provide resources like doctors/nurses/medicine/equipment
- E: increase the duration of programme/ Give info about schemes, visit days for specialist of attached hospital
- F: provide sufficient transport/buses not having enough space to take all students causing loss to students as well as families
- G: provide feedback facility to community/ families to monitor the implementation of programme.

Suggestion 4: How can the medical faculty/staff support the successful integration of the family adoption program into the MBBS curriculum? To enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the Family Adoption Program (FAP), students proposed several strategic improvements: 50.8% encouraged partnering with community organizations to identify suitable families, while 42.6% supported systematic monitoring and evaluation of program outcomes. A significant 39.3% called for dedicated curricular time for student engagement with adopted families, and 33.6% emphasized the importance of faculty training and guidance. Far smaller proportions endorsed practical interventions—9.8% favoured equipping students with basic medical equipment, and 6.6% advocated training them to provide basic medical care. These findings suggest a multipronged enhancement strategy: aligning institutional scheduling, bolstering community partnerships, investing in faculty preparedness, and providing targeted student resources to strengthen both educational depth and program delivery. [Table 3]

Table 3: recommendations on how faculty/ staff support the integration of FAP into MBBS

Suggestions	Responded yes (%)
Providing training and guidance for faculty members involved in the program	41 (33.6)
Allocating dedicated time for students to engage with adopted families	48 (39.3)
Collaborating with community organizations to identify suitable families for adoption	62 (50.8)
Monitoring and evaluating the program's effectiveness	52 (42.6)
Train students to provide basic medical care	8 (6.6)
Provide students with basic equipment	12 (9.8)

Suggestion 5: What according to you is the ideal time in the medical curriculum to introduce this programme?

- A. 1st year MBBS 93/122 (76.23%)
- B. 2nd year MBBS 14/122 (11.47%)
- C. 3rd year MBBS 13/122 (10.65%)
- D. 4th year MBBS 2/122 (1.63%)

Suggestion 6: What should be the ideal duration of this programme?

- A. 1-2 years 38/122 (31.15%)
- B. 2-3 years 31/122 (25.40)
- C. More than 3 years 20/122 (16.39%)
- D. Entire course 33/122 (27.05%)

Suggestion 7: Do you recommend continuation of this programme?

- Yes 108 (88.52%)
- No 14 (11.48%)

DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis in this article highlights key aspects of the Family Adoption Programme (FAP), including its impact on undergraduate medical students, the challenges they face, and suggested improvements. These themes closely align with insights reported in related literature.

Firstly, both this study and previous research (Fathima et al., 2021; Mallik, 2022) emphasize the value of community-based education in enhancing

students' understanding of the social determinants of health and improving their communication skills. Like the findings in the thematic analysis, where 100% of students acknowledged improved communication skills (I6), the ROP program in South India demonstrated a significant improvement in communication and empathy toward patients (Fathima et al., 2021).

Additionally, the challenge of implementing FAP effectively, highlighted in this article as resource and faculty shortages, resonates with similar concerns in the literature. Both Mallik (2022) and Yalamanchili et al. (2023) noted logistical barriers, including faculty workload, transportation issues, and lack of medical social workers, affecting FAP's sustainability.

Moreover, the students' suggestions for improving FAP, such as allocating more time for field visits and improving faculty training, align with recommendations in other studies that stress the importance of supportive infrastructure and faculty engagement to ensure successful implementation (Vanikar et al., 2024).

In conclusion, the thematic findings of this article reinforce the importance of community engagement in medical education, consistent with established evidence. While FAP has demonstrated significant benefits in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudinal changes among students, addressing the practical

challenges identified in both this study and the literature remains crucial for its sustained success.

CONCLUSION

The Family Adoption Programme has shown promise as an effective tool to enhance community-based medical education, bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical exposure to rural health. The thematic analysis of this study highlights its positive impact on students' communication skills, empathy, and understanding of the socio-cultural determinants of health. However, challenges such as inadequate resources, faculty shortages, and logistical barriers continue to hinder its uniform implementation. Addressing these challenges through strategic planning, improved infrastructure, and faculty support is essential to sustain and scale the FAP. With collaborative efforts and continued evaluation, the FAP can become an integral component of competency-based medical education in India, contributing to the training of socially accountable and community-oriented medical professionals.

Study implications

- The findings of this study can inform the development of educational interventions aimed at enhancing medical undergraduates' understanding.
- We can identify potential biases and misconceptions held by medical undergraduates towards adoption can lead to targeted interventions to mitigate them.
- The study's findings can contribute to the development of policies and guidelines within medical institutions.
- The study's findings can inspire further research in the field of adoption awareness and healthcare practices.

Recommendations:

- Divide the students in two groups, give FGD to each and make a comparison study

- Expanding sample size
- Include student from different cultural backgrounds
- Include students from batches who have already completed their FAP to include their opinions

Declarations: No conflicts of interest are there that may have influenced the study, including financial, institutional, or personal relationships.

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