What Factors Are Related to Medical Students’ and Doctors’ Attitudes Towards Older Patients?

Conference or Workshop Item

How to cite:

For guidance on citations see FAQs.

© 2017 The Authors

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

Version: Version of Record

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online’s data policy on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.
What factors are related to medical students’ and doctors’ attitudes towards older patients?

Rajvinder Samra, The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK; Tom Cox, Birkbeck University of London, London, UK; Adam Gordon, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK; Simon Conroy, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK; Mathijs Lucassen, The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK; Amanda Griffiths, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK.

Abstract

Questionnaire studies have sought to identify the possible determinants of medical students’ and doctors’ attitudes towards older patients by examining relationships with a variety of factors, such as demographic; educational/training; exposure to older people; personality/cognitive; and job/career variables. This review collates and synthesises these findings.

Methods

Design: Systematic literature review
Review question: Which variables show a relationship with doctors’ and medical students’ self-reported attitudes towards older patients?
Search terms: Boolean search in title or abstract: [physicians, medical students + 26 synonyms] AND [older people +17 synonyms] AND [attitudes + 18 synonyms].
Search strategy: An electronic search of 10 databases was performed (ABI/Inform, ASSIA, British Nursing Index, CINAHL, Informa Health, Medline, PsychINFO, Science Direct, Scopus, and Web of Science) through to 7 February 2017.
Inclusion/exclusion criteria: Studies were included if they: quantitatively measured and reported attitudes toward older patients in medical doctors or medical students; conducted correlational analyses or difference testing of scores on measure of attitudes towards older patients with any other variable; and published in English in a peer-reviewed journal.

Results: Characteristics of studies
Searches identified 2422 articles; 37 studies met the overall eligibility criteria set.
Quality: rated low quality (n=14); medium quality (n=18); high quality (n=5).
Study setting: USA (n=25); UK (n=3); Singapore (n=3); Australia (n=2); Other (n=4).

Results: Relationships identified
With 14 low quality studies removed from the analysis, the figure below shows a selection of variables investigated for their relationship with attitudes.

Conclusions

Across high and medium quality studies, positive attitudes towards older patients were related to:
• high quality personal relationships with older people,
• interest in pursuing geriatrics,
• intrinsic motivation to enter medicine (such as the desire to help others).
Negative attitudes towards older patients were related to:
• extrinsic motivation to enter medicine (such as financial rewards).

Avenues for future research

• Early identification of medical students who may be interested in working with older patients using questionnaire research;
• Explore intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for entering medicine as a factor for specialising in older patient-dominated areas of medicine;
• Explore the nature of the link between good quality personal relationships (as opposed to frequency of contact) with older people and attitudes;
• Consider geriatrics interventions which focus on personal relationships with healthy older people to improve attitudes.

References & Acknowledgements


This research was supported by an Economic and Social Research Council (United Kingdom) grant to the first author. Contact email: Rajvinder.samra@open.ac.uk