

Knowledge about Epilepsy in University Health Students: A Multicenter Study

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Short Title: Knowledge about Epilepsy in University Students

Abstract

Epilepsy is a disorder defined as an excessive disorganized electrical discharge in the brain. Even with economic development and improvements in health care around the world, it is estimated that nowadays 50 million people have epilepsy. It is one of the most prevalent neurological diseases, yet it is still surrounded by prejudice, stigma, lack of awareness and wrong attitudes of the population towards the disease. The aim of this study was to evaluate and compare the knowledge about epilepsy in health students from different countries: Brazil, Argentina, Portugal, United States and South Africa. Students were asked to complete a survey regarding knowledge about epilepsy, composed by 55 items related to medical and social aspects of the disease. One hundred and two students participated, 62.2% of them were female. The total average score was 36.9 (out of a possible score of 55) and Portuguese students had significantly higher values than the American ones ($p=0.025$). Regarding the medical aspects, on average, students hit 63.8% of the questions and the students from Portugal had significantly higher average than the ones from the United States ($p=0.0007$). Statements with lower percent of correct answers were about pathophysiology, medication and treatment of the disease. There were no differences between the scores obtained by the students of each country in the social aspects of the disease, and the percentage of correct answers was 65.2% on average. Statements with higher percent of mistakes were about sports practice, labor, proceedings in case of convulsion and ability to drive vehicles. General knowledge of senior health students about epilepsy was considered low, however, regarding the medical aspects of the disease, students from Brazil and Portugal exhibited a slightly superior knowledge. Changing the way of seeing and treating people with epilepsy brings as a consequence increased opportunities for these people in different sectors of society. Thus, qualification can contribute to a fairer and more tolerant society in which differences are respected.

Keywords: epilepsy; university students; knowledge.