

Editorial

Narcissism among Medical Students: The Good, The Bad And The Ugly

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The importance of empathy as a crucial component of the physician- patient relationship could not be denied. Empathy is important for both diagnosis and patient care [1] Empathy is important for the physician as well as his patient simply because it is protective against physician burnout. [2] Therefore many studies were published on investigating empathy among medical students or teaching them empathy [3-6].

On the other hand, narcissism characterized by authority, exhibitionism, superiority, entitlement, exploitativeness, self-sufficiency and vanity [7,8] was not studied enough among physicians let mention medical students. Narcissistic personality lacks empathy. [9] Besides, a narcissistic physician starts enjoying a honeymoon period of leadership, then the appeal and attractiveness of his leadership rapidly wane [10].

Therefore, I have recently supervised two students' studies [11,12] on narcissism on medical students at the RAK Medical & Health Sciences University (RAKMHSU) which have been published in the 7th RAK MHSU Students scientific conference. Both studies had two cross sectional design was using a structured questionnaire and the The 16-item Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI). NPI- 16 has notable face, internal, discriminant, and predictive validity and that it can serve as an alternative measure of narcissism when situations do not allow the use of longer inventories [13,14]. Both studies investigated the association of narcissistic traits among medical students with either internet addiction or healthy and/or unhealthy student behavior in a sample of 133 MBBS students, and 276 students in the first and second study respectively. In the first study, the mean scores of NPI-16 did not differ with gender nor age, while males had higher mean scores in the second study. No significant association was found between high

NPI scores and internet addiction using the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) [15]. Similarly in the second study, the NPI-16 had no relation with any of the 5 questions of Facebook Addiction (FA) using the The Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale-5 (BFAS) [16] in the second study. Besides it was found in the second study that smoking quitters had higher mean scores of than current or non smokers. Physical activities were more common among students with high mean scores of NPI- 16. Students with reckless driving had higher mean scores of NPI-16. That means narcissism among medical students has both protective and risky behavior faces. Narcissists follow health protective behaviors such as healthy diet and regular exercise, as they consider appearance and fitness important; hence, they spend a great amount of time in such activities.

Both studies highlighted an apparent contradictory between the healthy and the risky behaviors among medical students with narcissistic traits. Or, in other meaning, it showed the healthy side of a narcissist medical student. Clarke et al 2015 depicted the many faces of narcissism. [17] A more recent study by Rogoza et al. confirmed the the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept which separates the bright and dark sides of narcissism, and through their article they helped the reader to resolve some of the ambiguities that exist in the previously published research on narcissism [18].

To conclude, narcissism among medical students could have many faces: good, bad, and ugly. Therefore, as Clarke mentioned researchers have to construct their studies "based on a multidimensional conceptualisation of narcissism, and use multiple narcissism measures to examine its association with healthy or unhealthy outcomes" [17].

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