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Basic life support, a necessary inclusion in the medical curriculum: a cross-sectional survey of knowledge and attitude in Uganda

Nelson Ssewante[1*], Godfrey Wekha[1], Angelique Iradukunda[1], Phillip Musoke[1], Andrew Marvin Kanyike[2], Germinah Nabukeera[3], Nicholas Kisaakye Wamala[4], Wilson Zziwa[5], Lauben Kamuhangire[6], Jonathan Kajjimu[7], Tonny Stone Luggya[8] and Andrew Tagg[9,10]

Abstract

Background: Uganda continues to depend on a health system without a well-defined emergency response system. This is in the face of the rising cases of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest contributed largely to the high incidence of road traffic accidents. Non-communicable diseases are also on the rise further increasing the incidence of cardiac arrest. Medical students are key players in the bid to strengthen the health system which warrants an assessment of their knowledge and attitude towards BLS inclusion in their study curriculum.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in 2021 among undergraduate medical students across eight public and private universities in Uganda. An online-based questionnaire was developed using Google forms and distributed via identified WhatsApp groups. Chi-square or Fisher's exact test and logistic regression were performed in STATA 15 to assess the association between knowledge of BLS and demographics. $P < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

Results: Out of the total 354 entries obtained, 351 were analyzed after eligibility screening. Of these, ($n = 250$, 71.2%) were male less than 25 years ($n = 273$, 77.8%). Less than half ($n = 150$, 42.7%) participants had undergone formal BLS training.

Less than a third of participants ($n = 103$, 29.3%) had good knowledge ($\geq 50\%$) with an overall score of $42.3 \pm 12.4\%$. Age ($p = 0.045$), level of academic progress ($p = 0.001$), and prior BLS training ($p = 0.033$) were associated with good knowledge. Participants with prior training were more likely to have more BLS knowledge (aOR: 1.7, 95% CI: 1.1–2.7, $p = 0.009$).

The majority ($n = 348$, 99.1%) believed that BLS was necessary and would wish ($n = 343$, 97.7%) to have it included in their curriculum.

Conclusions: Undergraduate medical students have poor BLS knowledge but understand its importance. Institutions need to adopt practical teaching methods such as clinical exposures, field experience in collaboration with local implementers, and participating in community health promotion campaigns.

Keywords: Knowledge, Attitude, Basic life support, Medical student, Emergency response, Medical curriculum

*Correspondence: nelson.ssewante1@gmail.com
[1] School of Medicine, College of Health Sciences, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda
Full list of author information is available at the end of the article

Background

The provision of Basic Life Support (BLS) involves the recognition of sudden cardiac arrest followed by the activation of an emergency response system, early

Consent for publication
Not applicable.

Competing interests
The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Author details
[1]School of Medicine, College of Health Sciences, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda. [2]Faculty of Health Sciences, Busitema University, Mbale, Uganda. [3]School of Medicine, Kabale University, Kabale, Uganda. [4]Faculty of Clinical Medicine and Dentistry, Kampala International University, Ishaka-Bushenyi, Uganda. [5]Faculty of Medicine, Gulu University, Gulu, Uganda. [6]Faculty of Biology, Medicine, and Health, King Caesar University, Kampala, Uganda. [7]Faculty of Medicine, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Mbarara, Uganda. [8]Department of Anesthesia and Emergency Medicine, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda. [9]Emergency Department, Western Hospital-Footscray, Footscray, Victoria, Australia. [10]School of Medicine, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

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