

An Analytical Study of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices regarding NEXT among the Medical Students of G.S. Medical College, Hapur, U.P., India

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The National Exit Test (NEXT) is a newly introduced licensing examination in India, aiming to standardize medical education and ensure quality assurance. There is no clarity regarding NEXT among MBBS students. To assess the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of medical students regarding NEXT and identify areas for improvement. A cross-sectional study was conducted among 200 medical students of different batches using a pretested questionnaire, with a response rate of 100% (200 respondents). The study revealed significant gaps in knowledge (36% aware of NEXT resources) and preparedness (32% joined preparatory classes), with students expressing uncertainty and negativity towards NEXT. The study highlights the need of clear guidelines, targeted interventions, including orientation programs and standardized preparation resource material to support students in navigating the challenges of NEXT.

Keywords: National Exit Test (NEXT), questionnaire, knowledge, attitudes, practices.

I. INTRODUCTION

The National Exit Test (NEXT) is a new initiative introduced by the Indian government to standardize medical education and quality of health professionals. As a single licensing examination, NEXT aims to assess the competence of medical graduates, promoting uniformity and excellence in medical practice. The national medical license examination has been an important component in many countries of the world [1]. The license examination will ensure that every medical undergraduate having an opportunity to pursue postgraduate (PG) studies and competent enough to practice in the society [2]. However, the introduction of NEXT has sparked concerns and uncertainty among medical students, who are already navigating the challenges of rapidly changing dimensions of medical education. Recently NMC has proposed NEXT-1 and NEXT-2 for 2024 MBBS students in the latest circular without clearly giving indications for the previously eligible batches. Recently NMC has proposed NEXT-1 and NEXT-2 for 2024 MBBS students in the latest circular without clearly giving indications for the previously eligible batches [3].

NEXT was prescribed for medical graduates in section 15 and 57 of NMC Act 2019 [4]. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to explore the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of medical students of different ongoing batches regarding NEXT and areas of improvement, inform strategies to support students in navigating this significant change in medical education. This study is crucial in understanding the impact of NEXT on medical students and providing insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition and optimal outcomes.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was a cross-sectional study at G.S Medical college & Hospital Pilkhuwa, Uttar Pradesh after the approval of institutional Ethics committee, the study was conducted with sample size (n=200) using a pretested questionnaire.

Study period: data was collected over a period of 3 months between June 2024 to August 2024.

Inclusion criteria: The study participants consisted of MBBS students with their informed consent.

Exclusion criteria: Interns and MBBS students without consent.

Study tools: KAP questionnaire was designed to assess the knowledge, attitudes & practices towards NEXT. Questionnaire consisted of nineteen questions (eight related to knowledge, nine related to attitude, and two related to practice). Identity of the participant remained undisclosed.

Ethical consideration: ethical approval of institutional human ethics committee was obtained for all the eligible study subjects, informed consent was obtained after thoroughly explaining the purpose and nature of study.

Statistical analysis: The data will be analyzed by using different statistical tools in MS-Excel to plot tables and interpretation of results.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected by questioners are summarized in Table 1 and their comparison is shown in Figure 1.

Table 1: Response for knowledge, Attitude and Practice assessing questions for NEXT examination.

S. No.	Questions Related to Knowledge	Responses (%)	
		YES	NO
1	Are you aware about the National Exit Test?	100	0
2	Are you aware that NEXT will be in 2 phases?	100	0
3	Are you aware that the choice of branch in PG depends upon NEXT?	34	66
4	Are you aware that pattern of NEXT-1 will be MCQ?	100	0
5	Are you aware that NEXT-1 will access your theoretical knowledge and NEXT-2 will access your practical knowledge?	100	0
6	Do you know that 2 phases of NEXT will be conducted within 6 months?	80	20
7	Will it be implemented on batch 2021?	65	35
8	Are you aware about the resources available for NEXT preparation?	36	64
Questions Related to Attitude			
1	Is it fair to notify NEXT for students in the middle of the session?	0	100
2	Does this government decision create uncertainty among students?	94	6
3	Do you think that difference in university exam pattern and NEXT pattern will create extra pressure on students?	100	0
4	Do you think that NEXT will be better than NEET PG?	5	95
5	Do you feel that NEXT will create better chance to select specialization branches for deserving candidates?	5	95
6	Are you experiencing mental pressure by the notification of NEXT?	89	11
7	Do you think that orientation program about NEXT by colleges will be helpful for students?	43	57
8	Do you think that students will manage their time for preparation of NEXT in final year when most of the clinical subjects have been moved to final year?	3	97
9	Do you think NEXT brings standardization and quality assurance?	42	58
Questions Related to Practice			
1	Have you started doing anything regarding NEXT preparation whether online or offline?	36	64
2	Have you joined any preparatory classes online or offline for NEXT?	32	68

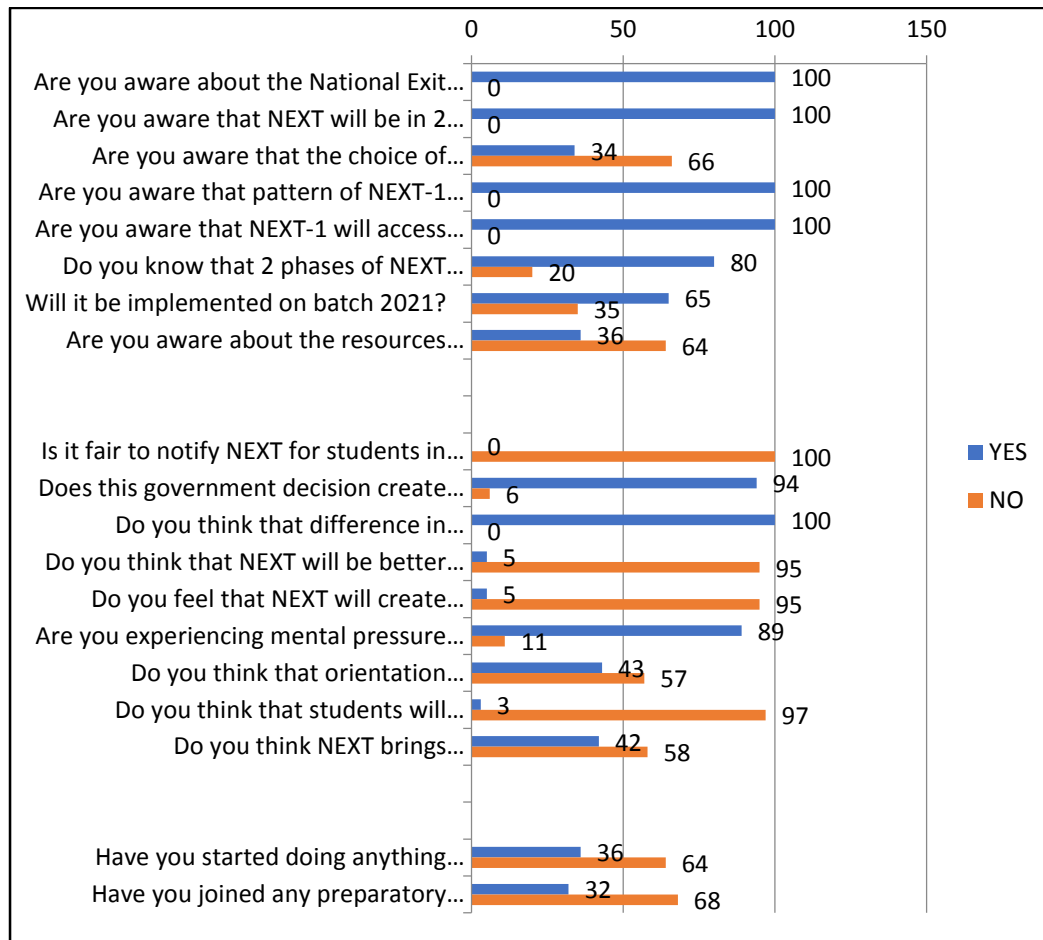


Fig. 1: Bar graph of Responses for knowledge, Attitude and Practice assessing questions for NEXT examination.

IV. RESULT

A total of 200 participants were included in the study. The responses of knowledge-based questions in our questionnaire suggested that 100%(n=200) of students were aware of inclusion of the National Exit Test (NEXT), its phases, pattern (MCQs) & assessment of theoretical (Phase-I) and practical knowledge (Phase-II) in their curriculum. Only 34%(n=68) students were aware of post graduate branch selection depends upon NEXT score. The resource material availability for NEXT preparation were known to only 36%(n=72) of MBBS students. The 65%(n=130) batch 2021 MBBS students were expecting NEXT implementation from their batch.

100%(n=200) students of MBBS batch agree that it is unfair to bring such a change in middle of the academic session. Moreover 94%(n=188) students felt that this creates uncertainty among students. 89%(n=178) students experienced mental pressure due to these uncertain notifications. Only a bunch of students i.e. 5%(n=10) believe that NEXT is going to be better than NEET PG and 42%(n=84) students are in favor that it brings standardization and quality assurance. 97%(n=194) students believed that they are not able to manage time for their studies due to increase of syllabus in final year.

From the above practice questionnaire, we observed that only 36%(n=72) students had started preparing for NEXT and 32%(n=64) students had joined preparatory classes

V. CONCLUSION

This study reveals a concerning gap and confusion in medical students' knowledge for the National Exit Test (NEXT). Despite being aware of the exam, students lack understanding of its implications and resources available. The prevailing uncertainty and negativity towards NEXT underscore the need for immediate attention. Educational institutions and policymakers must collaborate to provide targeted support, ensuring students are adequately equipped to navigate this significant change. By addressing these gaps, we can foster a more informed and confident medical workforce, ultimately enhancing healthcare quality in India. The Government also enhanced ambiguity about NEXT exam by taking different decisions as in official notice of July 2023 NEXT was deferred on the advise of ministry dated 11/07/23 till further notice and again it was implemented in same year [5]. This Government's decision has created a sure shot ambiguity among students giving them

unnecessary pressure and a toll on their mental health. The findings of this study serve as a call to action, emphasizing the need for proactive measures to ensure a seamless transition to the NEXT framework and optimize student outcomes.

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