

Original Article

KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE HEALTH CARE ETHICS AMONG SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS

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Abstract

Background: Speech Language Pathology is guided by ethical principle as it is the tool for professional discipline. It is generally agreed that morality is all about right and wrong conduct based on socially approved norms. Healthcare ethics deals with moral code of conduct to patients in healthcare setting, taking in consideration of individuality, safety, welfare and self respect of them. Increase in unethical behavior from healthcare professional is an problematic issue of immediate concern.

Objective: To assess the knowledge, attitudes and practice of health care ethics among speech language pathologists.

Methodology: The Cross Sectional study was done among Speech Language Pathologists at Riphah College of Rehabilitation Sciences, Lahore, within the duration of six months from 1st Jan 2017 to 30th June 2017 by using Convenient Sampling Technique. 104 Speech and language Pathologist (SLP) were included in the study. To conduct the research, standardized questionnaire was used which was previously used for assessing the (KAP) knowledge, attitudes and practice healthcare ethics among physiotherapists and medical students. The data was analyzed by Statistical package for Social sciences (SPSS) software 20. Percentage of responses were calculated. Chi-square test was applied to check the level of significance among different categories of available variables.

Results: A total of 104 respondent speech language pathologists, were included in the study. The distribution of gender comprised of 37.5% (n=39) males and 62.5% (n=65) females with 72.1% age range from the 23-28 years age group. 62% (n=65) speech language pathologists were unaware about the main contents of ethical knowledge. 42% (n=44) speech language pathologists responded that knowledge of ethics is very important to their work and majority 35.58% (n=37) got knowledge through lectures and seminars. 83.6% respondents were aware about the existence of no ethical committee at their institutions. As far as gender distribution was concerned 12% male and 27% female responded that knowledge of ethics is very important in work setting. Knowledge and attitude of healthcare ethics have a general manifestation on practical application of healthcare ethics.

Conclusion: Overall results of the study showed gaps in knowledge but significant relationship towards attitude and practice of healthcare ethics in speech language pathologists and institutions. Effort should be made to increase the knowledge about the ethics in medical profession.

Keywords: ethical committee, Healthcare Ethics, Speech Language Pathologist

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Introduction

Ethics is a discipline that deals with right and wrong conduct of human behavior.⁽¹⁾ The term ethics derived from the Greek word *ethicos* which is further derived from the word *ethos* meaning habit or custom. It is a set of moral values or principles that address whether intentions, goals or action are right and wrong. Ethics is the branch of Philosophy which includes defending, systematizing and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct. It is the moral code of conduct in a civil society which runs the beliefs, rules and customs of that society.⁽²⁾

Dates back to the ancient times, ethics applied to medical practice by the Hippocrates, known as father of medicine. They proposed the Hippocratic Oath which include the codes of conduct and laws regulating the profession and it was updated from time to time. The Hippocratic Oath had been taken by physicians upon entering the profession. In many countries, these codes have been included in the health professional's training curriculum and here has been seen a significant growth in the number of ethicists and ethical committees. But regardless of this, complaints against healthcare professionals appear to disseminate.⁽³⁾

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Speech language pathology is a professional field, practiced by a clinician known as a speech-language pathologist (SLP) also called speech therapist or speech and language therapist who specializes in the evaluation and treatment of communication and swallowing disorders. A Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) is a highly-trained professional who evaluates, treats children and adults who have difficulty with speech and language.⁽⁴⁾

Ethics is a set of ideas and moralities that guide us in determining what behavior helps or harms to humans. Rules of ethics are specific and defined statements of minimal acceptable professional conduct that are applicable to all individuals. Ethics resolve questions of human goodness by defining concepts of right, wrong, justice, delinquency and misconduct.⁽⁵⁾

Naturally, self-knowledge is considered necessary for success. A person who is aware about the knowledge

of ethics will act completely within his proficiencies and will not harm the patient while an unfamiliar person will run into difficulty. In Socrates point of view, if a person wishes to accomplish self-knowledge, he must become aware of every fact related to his existence then he will obviously do what is good, if he knows what is right.⁽⁶⁾

Health care ethics are necessary and essential in medical profession because this profession deals with providing services that impact on human life and health. If medical practitioners are not well handled these health care ethics in their practice can give negative impact on the patient⁽⁷⁾ because to achieve the best possible quality of life, practice involves the clinical judgment in the establishment of good care to enable people to improve, maintain and receive health to get by with health problems.⁽⁸⁾ The purpose of the study was to explore knowledge, attitude and practice of health care ethics among speech language pathologists

Methods

The Cross Sectional study was done among Speech Language Pathologists at Riphah College of Rehabilitation Sciences, Lahore, within the duration of six months from 1 January 2017 to 30 June 2017 by using Convenient Sampling Technique. To conduct the research, standardized questionnaire was used which was previously used and for assessing the knowledge, attitudes and practice of healthcare ethics among physiotherapists and medical students approved by the ethical committee of Riphah international university Lahore and Mayo hospital Lahore respectively. The participants, both male and female Speech Language Pathologists working in government, private and semi-government clinical settings were included. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants was maintained as no personal information was recorded on the questionnaire. The data was analyzed by SPSS-20. Endnote is used for the purpose of referencing citations.

Results

A total of 104 respondent speech language pathologists, working 48.1% (50) in government institution, 44.2% (n=46) in private institution and 7.7% (n=8) in semi-government institution, were included in the study. The gender distribution

comprised of 37.5% (n=39) males and 62.5% (n=65) females with 72.1% age range from the 23-28 years age group. 62% (n=65) speech language pathologists were unaware about the main contents of ethical knowledge. Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice of Healthcare Ethics among Speech Language Pathologists was judged by various questions from the standardized questionnaire was used which was previously used for assessing the knowledge, attitudes and practice of healthcare ethics among physiotherapists and medical students. In this study 15% males and 27% females (total 42%) speech language pathologists responded that knowledge of ethics is extremely important, 20% males and 31% females (51%) responded to very important and 7% males responded that it is little important. Majority 35.58% (n=37) got knowledge related to ethics through lectures and seminars while 62% participants reported about having no knowledge of ethics. In 83.6% respondents were aware about the existence of no ethics committee at their institutions. (Table 1). Attitude and practice of healthcare ethics is determined by questions that are related to attitude and practice. When participants were asked about the patient wishes that always adhere to then 29 SLP were strongly agree, 23 were agree, 5 were strongly disagree and 25 were disagree (Chi square value: 5.81, p=0.06). About the question regarding abandonment of confidentiality then 44 participants were disagree and 16 were strongly disagree, 15 were strongly agree and 8 were agree ($X^2=9.61$, p=0.02). SLP are the healthcare professionals who should whatever is best for patient 27 SLP in the current study were strongly agree, 31 were agree, 5 were strongly disagree and 20 were disagree. ($X^2=8.82$, p=0.007). (Fig 3). When questioned about the refusal of treatment of a patient who behaved violently was asked to SLPs then only 9 SLPs were agree, 9 were strongly agree, 22 were strongly disagree and 49 were disagree with the statement ($X^2=8.49$, p=0.03) (Table 2)

Table 1: Knowledge of ethics

Knowledge	n	%
Are you aware about the knowledge related to ethics?		
Yes	39	38
No	65	62
Total	104	100
Is there an ethical committee at your institution?		
Yes	16	15.5
No	87	83.7
Missing	1	1

Table 2: Attitude and Practice of Health Care Ethics

Questions for determining the Attitude and Practice of Health Care Ethics	Responses	Type of Institution			Total	X ²	P-value
		Government	Private	Semi-Government			
The patient's wishes must always be adhere to	Strongly Agree	15	13	1	29	5.81	0.06
	Disagree	11	13	1	25		
	Not Sure	9	10	3	22		
	Agree	13	7	3	23		
	Strongly Disagree	2	3	0	5		
Confidentiality is not important in modern care and should be abandoned	Strongly Agree	6	9	0	15	9.61	0.02
	Disagree	17	21	6	44		
	Not Sure	14	7	0	21		
	Agree	4	3	1	8		
	Strongly Disagree	9	6	1	16		
The SLP should do what is best irrespective of the patients opinion	Strongly Agree	15	10	2	27	8.82	0.00
	Disagree	7	13	0	20		
	Not Sure	13	6	2	21		
	Agree	12	16	3	31		
	Strongly Disagree	3	1	1	5		
SLPs should refuse to treat patients who behave violently	Strongly Agree	4	5	0	9	8.49	0.03
	Disagree	24	23	2	49		
	Not Sure	10	5	0	15		
	Agree	7	1	1	9		
	Strongly Disagree	5	12	5	22		

Discussion

A total of 104 respondent speech language pathologists were included in the study. The Study showed that 62% practicing speech language pathologists were unaware about the knowledge of ethics. The findings of this study on knowledge, attitude and practice of healthcare ethics among speech language pathologists, working in different clinical settings revealed more female participants than male participants. Results in this study about the knowledge of ethics were very poor. Among the two genders the 39% of female and 23% male speech language pathologists were found to be have no knowledge about ethics. This finding is in line with the findings of Anup N.et.al study who identified the important gaps of ethical knowledge in his study.⁽⁹⁾ In current study, 42% of the respondents agreed that ethical knowledge is very important in the health care profession. Similar findings were found by Heriharan.et.al in which most of the respondents (doctors and nurses) agreed to the importance of ethical knowledge.⁽¹⁰⁾ In present study, 83.7 % speech language pathologists aware about the existence of no ethical committee at institutions. Results of a study conducted by Heriharan.et.al showed same results in which a large number of professionals unaware about

the invisibility of ethics committee in hospital setting.⁽¹¹⁾

Significant relationship was seen between attitude and institutions in this present study which is similar to Chopra M.et.al 2013 and Brogen SA in 2009 study who reported the close relationship between attitude, working place and age. To assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of healthcare ethics, the present study showed the significance relationship between educational year, age and gender of participants and it is clearly showed the majority of speech language pathologists age in 23-28 years age group and these SLPs have not considerable knowledge of ethics although these years are active and youthful years of any individual's life and they can serve the patient in a better way if they have significance knowledge of ethics. Similar results was seen in a by Aliyu D.et.al study.

Patient's autonomy and confidentiality are the main components of healthcare ethics that have been practiced universally in all the code of ethics. The present study showed that n=29 (27.8%) SLP were towards patient's wishes that must always be adhere to Almost similar results have been reported Suden.et.al and McGuire.et.al study opinion regarding adherence to patient's wishes. Results are observed that most of the participants thought that

patient should be involved in decisions about their health and they had a positive attitude towards patient's autonomy.⁽¹²⁾

Confidentiality is a core issue of speech language pathologist and patient relationship. In this present study when participants were asked about the abandoned of confidentiality then n=60(57.69%) participants were disagree with that, Similar result was seen a study by Humayun et.al and Tahira Q.A where 93% respondents considered confidentiality to be important.⁽¹³⁾

n=58(55.7%) SLP In the current study showed that SLP should do what is best irrespective of the patients opinion Similar results have been reported in a study in which majority of the respondents thought that health care professional must do, whatever is best for the patient irrespective of patient's opinion. Different result was observed in a study in which majority of the participants reported that consent is required only for surgical procedures.⁽¹⁴⁾

When questioned about the refusal of treatment of a patient who behave violently was asked to SLPs then only n=18(17.3%) SLPs were agreed with that. Similar results have been reported in Tahira Q.A.et.al and Afzal et.al studies in which assisted suicide was not justified in any case and health care professional should take this account seriously while practicing.⁽¹⁵⁾

Conclusion

The findings of the study showed significance gaps in knowledge, attitude and practice of health care ethics among speech language pathologist. Speech language pathologists generally understand the importance of ethics but have poor knowledge of ethical contents. Regarding their practical application, they mostly follow the healthcare ethics in their practice which they have learnt from lectures and seminars. Most of the professionals have shown their great concern to consult on an ethical problem to ethics committee which is not present in their respective institute.

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Authors' contributions:

Aqsa Irum: Conception and design of the work, analysis and interpretation of data, revising article critically for important intellectual content for final approval.

Hina Sultana: Analysis and interpretation of data, revising article critically for important intellectual content for final approval.

Amna Asghar: the acquisition, analysis, drafting and revising article for final approval. Responsible for data integrity.