



Original Research Article

Awareness of Medico-Legal Responsibilities Among Interns: A Cross-Sectional Study at RIMS, Raichur.

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Abstract: Background: The transition from medical student to practicing doctor involves assuming significant medico-legal responsibilities. With the rising number of litigations against healthcare professionals, adequate knowledge of medical ethics and law is crucial. This study aims to assess the awareness of medico-legal responsibilities among medical interns. **Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 110 medical interns at the Raichur Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Raichur. Data regarding their knowledge on consent, medical record maintenance, the Consumer Protection Act (CPA), and handling of medico-legal cases (MLC) was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire and analyzed. **Results:** Out of 110 interns, 96.4% correctly identified written informed consent as the best type of consent in MLCs. However, significant gaps were observed in practical applications, with only 30.9% confident in issuing injury certificates and 33.6% confident in issuing medical cause of death certificates. Awareness of the Consumer Protection Act (CPA) was limited (29.1%), and confidence in attending court to give testimony was notably poor. **Conclusion:** While baseline theoretical knowledge is present, there are significant gaps in practical application and legal awareness, highlighting the need for targeted medico-legal orientation programs before and during the internship period.

Keywords: Medico-legal, Medical Interns, Awareness, Medical Ethics, Consumer Protection Act, Informed Consent.

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INTRODUCTION

The practice of medicine is fundamentally intertwined with legal and ethical frameworks. As medical interns bridge the gap between theoretical learning and independent clinical practice, they are often the first point of contact for patients in emergency departments and wards¹.

Consequently, their understanding of medico-legal responsibilities—ranging from informed consent and accurate medical documentation to identifying and

managing Medico-Legal Cases (MLCs)—is paramount.

In recent years, India has witnessed a surge in medical litigation and claims under the Consumer Protection Act (CPA). Ignorance of the law is not a valid defense in a court of law². Despite medical jurisprudence being a part of the undergraduate curriculum, practical application during the internship phase often reveals critical knowledge gaps³.

Further complicating matters, the recent reform of

India's criminal justice system—transitioning from the IPC, CrPC, and Indian Evidence Act to the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA)—has modernized legal responsibilities and reporting mandates for physicians⁴. This study was undertaken to evaluate the current level of medico-legal awareness among interns at the Raichur Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Raichur, to identify areas requiring educational intervention.

Objective

To assess knowledge about Medico Legal Responsibilities among Interns.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A questionnaire based descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in Raichur Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Raichur, Karnataka in month of April to May 2026. The study was carried out in 110 Medical Interns undergoing the Compulsory Rotatory Residential Medical Internship. Aim of the study was explained to participants and confidentiality about the result was ensured to them so as to get reliable answers. Those who not willing to participate were excluded from the study. A pre-tested, semi-structured questionnaire comprising multiple-choice questions was administered. The collected data was compiled using Microsoft Excel. Data analysis was performed to generate frequency distributions and percentages.

RESULTS

General Medico-Legal Knowledge and Consent

A total of 110 interns responded to the questionnaire. The baseline awareness of what constitutes an MLC and the protocols for obtaining consent were evaluated. The results are summarized in Table 1.

Sr. No.	Question / Parameter	Correct / Positive Response n (%)
1	Knows what a Medico-Legal Case (MLC) is	110 (100%)
2	Aware of responsibilities while handling an MLC	71 (64.5%)
3	Best type of consent in MLC	106 (96.4%)
4	Minimum legal age for valid consent for physical examination	11 (10.0%)

Medical Documentation and Record Preservation

Knowledge regarding the preservation of hospital medical records was fragmented. A substantial portion believed there was no fixed duration or were unsure (42 interns, 38.2%).

Sr. No.	Question / Parameter	Correct / Positive Response n (%)
5	Duration hospital medical records should be preserved	50 (45.5%)

Handling Specific Medico-Legal Scenarios

Interns showed relative confidence in clinical assessments (e.g., burns and poisoning) but confidence dropped significantly when dealing with legal documentation and certification as detailed in Table 3.

Sr. No.	Question / Parameter	Correct / Positive Response n (%)
6	Confident in steps of management of poisoning cases	67 (60.9%)
7	Confident in burn assessment (rule of nine)	84 (76.4%)
8	Correct percentage of burn over front and back of trunk	44 (40.0%)
9	Aware of evidence to be collected in sexual assault cases	70 (63.6%)
10	Confident in issuing an injury certificate	34 (30.9%)
11	Confident in issuing a medical cause of death certificate	37 (33.6%)
12	Knowledge of cases requiring medico-legal autopsy	28 (25.5%)

Awareness of Recent Laws and Acts

Awareness regarding new legal frameworks (BNS, BNSS) and established medical acts (COPRA, HOTA) showed significant gaps among the interns.

Sr. No.	Question / Parameter	Correct / Positive Response n (%)
13	IPC replaced with Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)	63 (57.3%)
14	CrPC replaced with Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS)	52 (47.3%)
15	Euthanasia permitted in India	35 (31.8%)
16	Aware of Consumer Protection Act (COPRA)	32 (29.1%)
17	Aware of Human Organ Transplantation Act (HOTA)	40 (36.4%)

Willingness for Improvement

A majority of participants expressed willingness to attend CME programs (99.1%) and preferred structured training before and during the internship (97.3%).

DISCUSSION

The current study of 110 interns at RIMS, Raichur, revealed that while theoretical awareness of certain fundamental concepts (like informed consent) is high, there is a distinct lack of confidence and practical knowledge regarding medico-legal documentation, court procedures, and newly enacted laws^{2,3,5}.

Comparison on Consent & Documentation: In our study, 96.4% of interns recognized the importance of written informed consent. This is notably higher than findings by Reddy and Abhinandana, where 78.5% of participants were aware of the requirement of informed written consent prior to surgery⁵. However, knowledge regarding the preservation of medical records was deficient, with only 45.5% aware of the 5-year retention guideline. Jambure and Jambure reported similar findings, observing that only 46% of interns were aware of hospital medical record preservation rules².

Handling MLCs & Certification: Our data highlights a severe lack of confidence in drafting injury and death certificates, with roughly 30% of interns feeling confident. This is consistent with observations by Shilpa Rani et al., who found that students irrespective of category had the least knowledge about how to write an injury certificate, and very few interns were aware of the WHO death certificate format³.

New Criminal Justice System & Legal Acts: The transition from the IPC/CrPC to the newly enacted BNS/BNSS/BSA is a critical update for medical practitioners. In our study, 57.3% were aware of the transition to BNS. This aligns with a recent 2025 study by Biyabani et al., which noted a 63.2% awareness of the legal transition from IPC to BNS among early-career doctors⁴. Additionally, poor awareness of COPRA and HOTA in our study echoes findings from Bose et al., who emphasized that awareness regarding these acts is insufficient and must be increased⁶.

Implications: The overwhelming agreement among participants (97.3%) that medico-legal education needs strengthening points to an urgent systemic need. Shrigiriwar and Thube found that 80% of interns necessitate hands-on training in Clinical Forensic Medicine (CFM) in the MBBS curriculum to bridge the gap between theory and practical application⁷.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights that while interns at RIMS, Raichur possess basic theoretical knowledge concerning consent and the identification of medico-legal cases, there is a discernible gap in their practical medico-legal

readiness, particularly concerning documentation, recent legal reforms, and courtroom testimony. Bridging this gap requires an active transition from didactic undergraduate lectures to case-based, practical training during the internship phase.

Recommendations

- **Implementation of Mandatory Workshops:** A rigorous medico-legal orientation program should be introduced at the immediate onset of the internship.
- **Curriculum Updates:** Periodic Continuous Medical Education (CME) sessions must integrate updates on newly enacted laws (BNS, BNSS, BSA).

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