

Perceptions regarding academic integrity among entry-level health-professions students in a university in UAE

Gomathi Kadayam Guruswami, Gulf Medical University, United Arab Emirates; Sabiha Mumtaz, University of Wollongong in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Aji Gopakumar, Gulf Medical University, United Arab Emirates; Engila Khan, Gulf Medical University, United Arab Emirates; Fatima Abdullah, Gulf Medical University, United Arab Emirates

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Gulf Medical University (GMU) is a private international co-educational health-professions university. Students come to GMU from different academic systems and wide variations are noted in most aspects of learning and behavior. A high level of professional integrity is expected from healthcare professionals and reports suggest unethical medical professionals had poor behavior from medical school. We conducted a cross-sectional study to assess a) perceptions regarding academic integrity, b) cheating behavior, and c) reasons underlying cheating behavior, in first- and second-year students. A survey prepared using google forms was validated, pilot-tested and disseminated to all first- and second-year undergraduate students (n=830). Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS-23. Pearson's Chi-square/Fischer's exact test was applied to test the association of various factors with academic misconduct. 211 students (24%) responded, 77% were female. Knowledge of academic integrity was perceived to be "very good/good" by 83.5% of students. Cheating using notes in a test or copying in an exam was considered "serious" by 73.5% and 71% students while copying an assignment/getting an assignment done by another student was considered as "serious" by only 53%. 7% students mentioned indulging in cheating behavior in GMU. No association was found between age, college/program, awareness regarding academic integrity or perception of faculty response, and cheating behavior. Only previous cheating behavior was found to be significantly associated ($p < 0.001$) with cheating in GMU. More needs to be done to help students better understand the different forms of academic dishonesty and the importance of ethical behavior and professionalism in future workplaces.