

# CHAPTER: 17

## **PREPAREDNESS FOR ONLINE LEARNING IN THE MEDICAL COLLEGE OF MADHYA PRADESH**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Madhya Pradesh (MP) comes under Empowered Action Group [EAG] states. The health indicators of MP are very poor and achieving the MDG target by 2015 is paradoxical. In this context there is an urgent need to think outside of the box and develop strategies by which the health indicators can be improved. One of the important aspects which needs special focus in this regard is research. To enhance health and diminish health disparities, policymakers in the public domain must identify optimal solutions for the most challenging health issues. They also need to determine effective strategies to integrate these solutions into intricate and frequently overtaxed health systems with limited resources. Additionally, policymakers must discern the most effective approaches for instigating the desired transformations within health systems. Systematic reviews play a crucial role in guiding public policymaking by offering evidence-based responses to these inquiries.[1]

The societal value of health research capacity is substantial, as it furnishes crucial information on disease trends, risk factors, treatment outcomes, public health interventions, functional capabilities, care patterns, and healthcare costs and utilization. Diverse research approaches offer complementary perspectives, enhancing our overall understanding. [2]

In India, there are a total of 381 medical colleges, but a mere 2.5% of them contribute to 96.0% of the total research publications as of 2007. While the scientific exploration of this research inequality is lacking, it can be hypothesized that it stems from the involvement of less-informed medical professionals. Closing this information gap requires fostering collaboration among medical colleges in the realm of research. An analysis of research publications reveals that a significant portion of research is focused on non-priority health areas in the country, where health indicators are already favorable. This unguided research results in the proliferation of ineffective knowledge. Addressing this issue necessitates building the capacity of researchers to identify priority health research areas and providing them with the knowledge and skills for sound research protocol design [3].

## **RATIONALE**

Previous studies as mentioned above clearly depicted that online learning was important and requires readiness of the medical institutions in terms of infrastructure and human resource but till date and to the best of our knowledge no study was conducted which highlights the preparedness of medical colleges of MP for online learning courses. The current study focused predominantly on this gap.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

1. What was the level of preparedness of online learning in the medical colleges of MP?

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To study usage of online learning courses by the study participants
2. To explore perception and acceptance of e-learning among the participants.
3. To study availability of infrastructure for online learning in the medical colleges of MP

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A mixed method study design was used. This study was conducted in the Community Medicine Departments of eight medical colleges in five cities (Bhopal, Ujjain, Jabalpur, Sagar, and Indore) in Madhya Pradesh, identified by coded names A to H to maintain confidentiality. The study participants included faculty members, postgraduate students, and IT operators/administration personnel, totalling 31 researchers. The research spanned a duration of three months, from February 2, 2015, to May 12, 2015. The sample size was determined based on viability and feasibility considerations, aiming to gather insights into the utilization and perceptions of information technology in the medical education context within these institutions. Purposive sampling method was used.

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

Sub-themes under these categories highlighted varying degrees of awareness, connectivity issues, benefits such as time-saving and globalized knowledge access, and differing opinions on the future use of online learning. Additionally, the study assessed the IT infrastructure in eight medical colleges, revealing disparities in facilities, including bandwidth, IT department presence, digital library availability, and security measures. Recommendations for improvement include enhancing IT infrastructure, providing sufficient resources, and fostering awareness among participants. The bandwidth was generally satisfactory, with seven colleges having 1 Gbps, and one with 10 Mbps. Digital libraries were available in four colleges, ensuring internet access in these spaces. Adequate backup measures, such as electricity backup and antivirus installations, were universally present. However, deficiencies were noted, including the absence of a digital library or internet café in some colleges, insufficient quantities of essential infrastructure like speakers, webcams, and headphones, and a lack of provision for videoconferencing in most colleges. Recommendations include enhancing IT resources, ensuring adequate infrastructure, and addressing specific deficiencies in each college to optimize the overall IT environment for researchers.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the above discussion it was clear that the young researchers though don't deny the fact that online learning is important but are not in completely favour of it. As they were more used to pursuing courses through conventional and traditional classroom lectures. Further research could be done on the quality of the online courses and how these courses could be made more interactive like the traditional courses so that the participants don't lack the element of "human touch" in the e-courses.

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