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Attitudes towards the elderly among the young family physicians in Turkey

Tugba Onat(1), C Kendir Copurlar(1), M Kartal(1), N Tekin(2)

(1) Dokuz Eylul University Hospital, Department of Family Medicine, Izmir, Turkey

(2) Izmir Narlidere Residential and Nursing Home, Izmir, Turkey

Corresponding author: Dr Tugba Onat, Dokuz Eylul University Hospital, Family Medicine, IZMIR, Turkey. E-mail: tugba.onat@hotmail.com

Background: Turkey is aging and the knowledge and attitudes towards the elderly among the health professionals becomes an important issue for the welfare of elderly. Family physicians (FP) role is important as they are easily accessible especially for elderly.

Aim: To determine attitudes of junior family physicians toward elderly by University of California at Los Angeles Geriatrics Attitude Scale (UCLA-GAS) as it can be an important basis for present and future education and practice planning of family physicians.

Method: It's a cross-sectional study where a questionnaire including UCLA-GAS is used. The study population is 260 junior FP (residents and FP in their first five years after qualification). UCLA-GAS studied by Reuben et al. (1998) is one of the scales used to assess attitudes of health care providers toward elderly. Its Turkish validity and reliability was studied by Sahin et al. (2012). It has 14 items assessed with a Likert scale. As one's score increases, his/her attitude assessed as more positive.

Results: Of the participants; %58.1 (n=151) women, %35.4 (n=94) of them were FP, and others were residents. Mean age was 31.30 ± 5.40 (Range:24-55). Mean score of UCLA-GAS was 46.85 ± 5.63 (Range:30-61). The participants aged ≤ 30 years had significantly ($p=0.003$) higher scores (47.70 ± 5.99) than aged above 30 (45.68 ± 4.89). There was no statistically significant difference between residents and FP ($p=0.989$) and between participants who had elderly health education (n=63) or not (n=197) ($p=0.383$). However, duration of work increased score of UCLA-GAS decreased significantly ($r=-0.216$, $p<0.001$). Participants who had education voluntarily had higher scores ($p=0.028$).

Conclusion: Family physicians who were interested in elderly as expected showed more positive attitude. However, physicians who were older, and worked longer duration had less positive attitude. It seems important to understand and prevent this unfavorable attitude change occurs in time.