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## **Depression among Students in sample of Iraqi Medical Collage**

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### **Abstract:**

Depression is a mental illness considered as one of the main causes of disability worldwide, Depression is a very common condition, but its prevalence varies widely between different countries. The aim of the study to Detect the prevalence of depression among medical students in selected medical colleges in Baghdad province at 2016/2017, 2017/2018.with detection of the severity of depression among the students who had positive results then to illustrate the percentage of treated students with comparison of the depression rates in two consecutive years.

A cross-sectional study, done in three medical schools in Baghdad, the study was conducted in the 2016–2017 and 2017-2018 academic years, involving all study years and both genders.

The depression prevalence increased from 21.9% in 2017 to 27.5% in 2018.The results indicated that the highest rate of prevalence of depression is in the 3rd year with 16.6% of all depression cases, and in females with 11:4 Female to male ratio of depression. The results showed that 21% of the depressed students have suicidal tendencies.

Depression prevalence is most common among students of third stage, moderately sever type of depression is the most common, only 15% of cases receive treatment with reported cases of suicidal tendencies.

**Keywords:** Depression, Students, Medical Collage



## **Introduction**

Depression is a mental illness considered as one of the main causes of disability worldwide (1). It is characterized by depressed mood, a loss of interest or pleasure in everyday experiences, and a range of cognitive, emotional, behavioral and physical symptoms. Depression is common in the general population and affects around one hundred twenty one million people in the world (2). Depression is a very common condition, but its prevalence varies widely between different countries (3). Medical students are always suffering from pressure and stress, heavy workload, lots of competition, long hours of work during clinical rotations (4). All these leads to lack of sleep, extreme conditions of residency, on the other hand many of them felt that the mental health support available to them was inadequate (5). Most of the medical students start to suffering from (SIGECAPS) from the first year in the medical college with symptoms of major depression (6). Even reported that medical students more susceptible to get depression than the general population with experiencing suicidal thoughts more than those other students (7).

Few researches have been done into the mental health of Iraqis (8). The aim of the study to Detect the prevalence of depression among medical students in selected medical colleges in Baghdad province at 2016/2017, 2017/2018 with assessments its severity among the students who had positive results then to illustrate the percentage of treated students and comparing the depression rates in two consecutive years.

## **Materials & Methods**

This cross-sectional study was conducted in the 2016–2017 and 2017-2018 academic years. Performed at three medical schools in Baghdad, Iraq (college of medicine of Baghdad university, Al-Mustansarya university and Al-Iraqia university) was based on volunteering, anonymity, and self-reporting. All medical students from first to fifth grade who had Facebook Accounts at random grades in the corresponding medical schools during the time of the study were accepted as possible study participants using Patient health questionnaire (PHQ) to assess the clinical severity of depression. PHQ-9 is a 9-item self-reported questionnaire in which each item consists of four statements indicating different levels of severity of a particular symptom experienced over the past 2 weeks incorporates many different depression diagnostic criteria. PHQ scores  $\geq 10$  has a sensitivity of 88% and a specificity of 88% for major depression. Questions to check whether the participants are receiving and/or thinking about receiving treatment for depression. The students were informed that the data is going to be used as a part of the research. The data were collected using google forms and analyzed using Microsoft excel and google forms.

## **Results**

In 2016-2017 74 students participated in the survey with their parameters recorded in table 3:1.

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In 2017-2018 292 students was collected in two consecutive years by using google forms using PHQ-9 to assess clinical depression. The participants are chosen randomly and consist of 212 females and 70 males from the 1st to the 5th grade from medical colleges of Al-Iraqia university, Baghdad university, and Al-Mustansiriya university.

The depression prevalence increased from 21.9% in 2017 to 27.5% in 2018. The results indicated that the highest rate of prevalence of depression is in the 3rd year with 16.6% of all depression cases, and in females with 11:4 Female to male ratio of depression. And the results showed that 21% of the depressed students have suicidal tendencies. 15% of the depressed students seek treatment by either

talking with people, self-prescribed anti-depressants, or consulting a psychiatrist.

There is a high variability in the number of participants from different grades and colleges, which is attributed to refusal of students to participate in the research, which may result in a bias in the results. their statistical data detales shown in table 3:2.

The highest prevalence of depression is in the 3rd year with and higher frequency reported in females (73.3%) most of them moderately severe depression (40%) of the cases (21.6%) think they're better dead or thought about hurting themselves. (56.6%) of the people with depression didn't seek any kind of help while (15%) did either by talking with people, self-prescribed anti-depressants, or consulting a psychiatrist.

**Table 3:1 Parameters of participants in 2016-2017**

Parameters (Total no.73 students)		Frequency%
% of depression	21.9%	
Depression frequency among grades	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	19%
	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	25%
	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	37%
	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	13%
	5 <sup>th</sup> grade	6%
Gender frequency of depressed students	Male	50%
	Female	50%

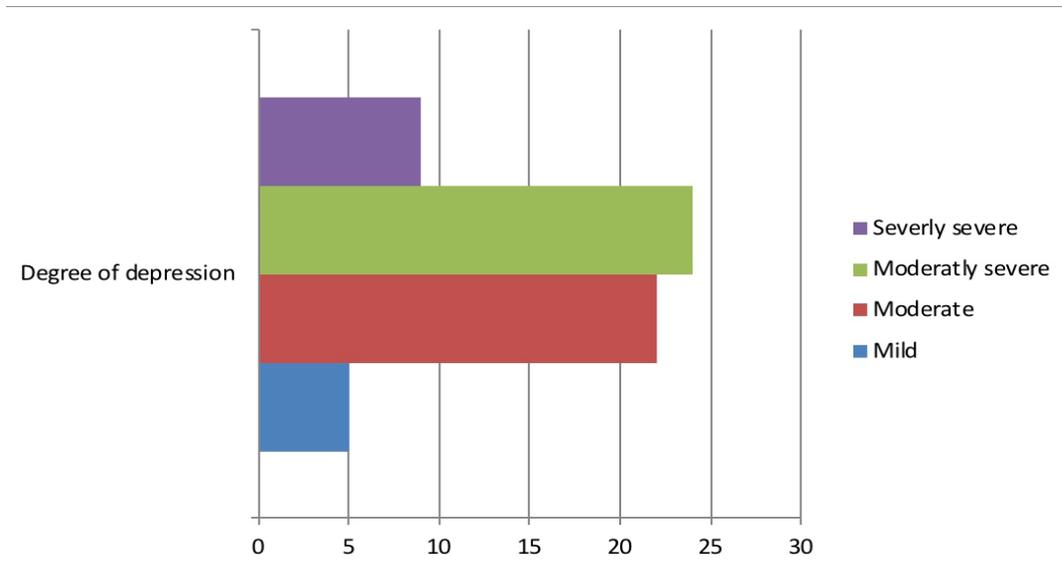
The depression prevalence increased from 21.9% in 2017 to 27.5% in 2018. The results indicated that the highest rate of prevalence of depression is in the 3rd year with 16.6% of all

depression cases, and in females with 11:4 Female to male ratio of depression, and the results showed that 21% of the depressed students have suicidal tendencies.



**Table 3:2 Parameters of participants in 2017-2018**

Parameters		Al Iraqia university	Baghdad University	Al-Mustansiriya university
Participants frequency%(no.)	100%(218)	10.1% (22)	11.9% (26)	78% (170)
frequency% (no.) of depression in total	27.5% (60)	8%	18%	74%
Severity of depression	Severely sever	20% (1)	9% (1)	16% (7)
	Mod. sever	40% (2)	27% (3)	43% (19)
	Moderate	40% (2)	64% (7)	30% (13)
	mild			11% (5)
% of depression fin study year	1 <sup>st</sup> grade 14%			
	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade 25%			
	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade 33%			
	4 <sup>th</sup> grade 18%			
	5 <sup>th</sup> grade 10%			
Gender frequency	Male 28.4%	3	3	25%(11)
	Female 71.6%	2	8	75%(33)



**Fig 3:1 severity of depression among positive results**

**Discussion**

The results of the study compared with the rates published in the journal of the American medical association 2016, we found an almost

identical result of depression of 27.5% and 27% and a slightly higher suicidal tendency rates of 13% compared to 11%.



In addition to the results of a study conducted in the University of Minho, the propagation of depression is in a completely different trend; where they had a significant downward trend in BDI scores in the first three years at medical school, the BDI scores raised again slightly but not significantly in the fourth year; while in our study there is an upward trend in the increase of prevalence of depression in the first three years which decreases gradually in the 4th year but greatly decrease in the 5th year (12).

In comparison to an article that focused on the depression amongst college students, our study showed a significantly lower prevalence of depression of 27.5% while the other study showed a 53% prevalence of depression (13-15). Rohan et al. reported by year of study, Year 1 students had the highest rates of depression at 33.5% but in our student the third year has the highest frequency probably the larger number of lessons in the third stage with introduction of clinical sessions increasing stress leads to more depression while Rohan et al. reported the rates of depression then gradually decreased to reach 20.5% at Year 5 which is matched with our results (16).

## Conclusion

There is a rise in the prevalence of depression among medical students from 21.8% to 27.5% from 2016/2017 to 2017/2018. The most common class of depression is moderately severe depression with 40% of the cases, followed by moderate depression (36.6%), severely severe depression (15%), and mild depression (6%). A very small number of depressed students receive treatment (15%).

## Limitation

Many students refused to participate in the survey for a variety of reasons, they stated the reasons as: They did not want their personal information to be used in a research (even though the questionnaire provides anonymity). They have already participated in a number and studies and didn't want to participate in any more studies and lastly some didn't participate because they say they are "too lazy to fill the form".

## Recommendation

The college should implement a depression-screening program to identify the students who suffer from clinical depression, and provide counseling and support. Encouraging the depressed students to seek help either by talking to friends/family, find a hobby to divert their attention, Removing the current way of thinking and elaborating that there is no social stigma in visiting a psychiatrist; that not every drug used in psychiatry is used to treat psychosis or mental disability; and you won't need to have an electroconvulsive therapy just because you are visiting a psychiatrist.

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