

## PREVALENCE OF DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS IN MEDICAL STUDENTS

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Depression, anxiety and stress symptoms are common in medical students. The objective of the paper was to assess and to compare the prevalence of depressive symptoms in the first and fourth year medical students. Methods. The cross-sectional study based on the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) was done.

The response rate was 83% (331 of 400). Overall, 48% of the students (both first and fourth year) had symptoms of depression. The average PHQ-9 score in first year students was significantly higher than in fourth year students,  $6.75 \pm 4.60$  vs.  $5.03 \pm 4.67$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . The most prevalent were mild depressive symptoms and they were observed in almost every third medical student. The female students had significantly higher average PHQ-9 score compared with the male students  $6.37 \pm 4.88$  vs.  $4.89 \pm 4.27$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . The significant negative correlation between depressive symptoms in medical students and their everyday achievement was observed ( $\rho = 0.610$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ).

More than a half of all the examined students did not have signs of depression and 48% of them did. Depressive symptoms were more prevalent in the first year students than in the fourth year students and also among the female compared with the male students. Depressive symptoms had a significantly negative impact on daily activities of the students. During medical studies students experience high levels of stress and they should be screened for the symptoms of depression.

*Acta Medica Medianae 2019;58(4):18-25.*

**Key words:** depressive symptoms, prevalence, medical students, PHQ-9 questionnaire