

ABSTRACT

The relationship between perceived stress, sex, age, personality, entry qualification and academic grades were examined in a sample of 78 first year medical students at University of West Indies.

Students were administered a stress questionnaire on which they rated their perception of 33 stress items. Personality was measured using a psycho-neurotic scale, the Crown-Crisp Experiential Index.

The major statistical analyses involved are:

- (a) Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient
- (b) Analysis of variance

A weak, negative relationship was found between stress and grades which was not statistically significant. No significant differences were found between the means of grades with age, sex or entry qualification. However those students who entered medical school with a U.W.I. degree tended to perform consistently better.

There were significant differences between low, medium and high grades and somatization and hysteria psycho-neurotic traits. The students who had a tendency to somatic complaints (somatization) obtained low grades and the students with extreme grades, either high or low, were more prone to hysterical behaviour than students with average grades.

Biochemistry test grades were found to be negatively related to anxiety psycho-neurotic trait and overall stress score. Also sex was found to be significantly related to community health. The results indicated that students with high anxiety levels and who perceived high levels of stress have low biochemistry grades and that females in the sample performed better than males in community health.

These results have implications for selection and prediction of successful and well adjusted physicians. Further research on stress in medical students at U.W.I., using a bio-psyco-social method is necessary and relevant in understanding the effect of stress on the medical student.