

‘Neurophobia’ and neurology education in 21st century

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Statement of the problem: The implications of ‘neurophobia’ are still under recognized in medical education. At the same time, the magnitude of neurologic disorders, as the second leading cause of death after heart disease and the leading cause of disability, mandates a substantial need for trained health workforce to develop competence and confidence in the care of patients with neurologic disease. The global burden of neurologic disease is expected further to increase as a result of population growth and ageing.

Methodology & theoretical orientation: We performed a search for peer-reviewed articles published between January 1995 and February 2023 using PubMed, EMBASE, Medline, Google Scholar and Cochrane Library. ‘Neurophobia’ was described during postgraduate training and later in the professional career, causing avoidance of examination of the nervous system. Undergraduates ranked neurology to be more difficult than any other discipline to learn because of large number of complex and rare neurological diagnoses, limited exposure to neurological patients and opportunity to work with a neurologist, overreliance on passive lectures, instead of bedside teaching, lack of clinical reasoning exercises and innovative methods to bridge the educational gap. The trainees’ knowledge and confidence in the management of neurologic cases increased mostly during bedside tutorials, followed by textbooks, studying with a small group of classmates, case discussions, electronic resources. Numerous innovative approaches were implemented to improve education and increase learner confidence, including simulation, eLearning, 3D modeling/printing, virtual reality, podcasts/smartphone/social media.

Conclusion: Applications of basic neuroscience to clinical scenarios, frequent and effective exposure to neurology teaching are quintessential. This can reduce ‘neurophobia’, improve neurological knowledge and augment in medical profession comfort levels with neurological examination and clerkship. However, lack of time within the curriculum might be a barrier to implementation. More research is needed to apply interventions to develop a fascination with neurology.

Biography

Elina Melikyan, Neurology Consultant, MD, PhD, Doctor of Medical Science, MBA. In 1985, she is graduated from Yerevan Medical University, Armenia, with honour. She was engaged in an array of medical education projects since 1999. In 2004, she earned PhD in Neurology & Clinical Pharmacology and later became Associate Professor of Neurology, Pirogov’s National Medical & Surgical Center, Neurology & Neurosurgery Department, Moscow and then Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine at Russian National Medical University (RNMU) named after N. I. Pirogov, Moscow. In 2011, she completed dissertation on Health-related Quality of Life in Epilepsy Patients at RNMU, Neurology & Neurosurgery Department and St Luka’s Institute of Child Neurology and Epilepsy, Moscow. She is an author of more than 60 publications in peer-reviewed medical journals and textbook chapters, her research spans pain, cognitive impairment, epilepsy and medical rehabilitation. She had been working in the UK since 2016. She moved to Basildon University Hospital in 2021.

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