

Best Practices at MGIMS Sevagram Orientation Camp

1. Title of the Practice

Orientation Camp

2. Objectives of the Practice

This orientation camp is conducted for newly admitted students, with the objectives:

- To orient them to a value system based on Gandhian ideology
- To help students adapt to the new environment at MGIMS, Sevagram
- To sensitize students to the code of conduct followed at MGIMS, Sevagram
- To sensitize students to the need of developing personal and professional skills; e.g. working in teams, stress management, time management etc.

3. The Context

Most medical schools in India do not include components of value education. Education which does not inculcate values has great perils. An important question to be asked about contemporary medical education is: are we producing physicians with robust moral values? The Orientation Camp (together with other innovations in curriculum at Sevagram) is an effort to introduce students who have been admitted into the MBBS course to value education.

When students join medical school, they are excited, but also apprehensive about the new environment. There is need to build a system which helps students adapt easily to the new environment.

4. The Practice

Soon after admission to MGIMS, students attend a 15-day orientation course in the Gandhi Ashram at Sevagram. Eminent Gandhians and people who have dedicated themselves to the service of the underprivileged are invited to deliver lectures on Gandhian Thought. Students are thus helped to appreciate the humanistic dimensions of their profession.

The daily routine of the students includes morning and evening all-religion prayer, yoga classes and sports. The students engage in self-help and learn the value of dignity of labour by washing their own utensils and cleaning their own clothes. Students also participate in community activities like spinning yarn, shramdan and all religion prayer.

The students are taught about the relevance of Gandhian ideology in today's world with reference to personal hygiene, environmental sanitation and nutrition. During the camp, students are also oriented to alternate systems of medicine like yoga and nature cure and spiritual health.

Over the years, we have also made efforts to reorganize and modify the curriculum of the orientation camp in view of the recommendations of the Medical Council of India to develop it as a Foundation Course. Recently, we have started sensitizing students to need to develop personal and professional skills such as, communication skills, stress management and time management. A workshop on 'Values in healthcare: a spiritual approach' (VIHASA) adapted from the modules developed by the Prajapita Brahma Kumari Group for the Maharashtra University of Health Sciences was also piloted in the camp.

5. Evidence of Success

The feedback from students and alumni regarding the Orientation camp has always been positive. Students said that the camp made them aware of the current socio-political environment for health, helped them recognize the rights and equality of all people, gave them the concept of health as a human right and made them believe in health equity. The camp also helped them develop a sense of security and prevented feelings of homesickness and loneliness.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

MGIMS, Sevagram has the unique advantage of being located in the vicinity of Gandhi Ashram in Sevagram. Organizing a residential camp for students, immediately after students enter the college, has its own challenges. Many students find it difficult to adapt to Ashram life and some of them do crib about this while they are attending the camp. However, all of them later vouch that it was a life-time experience which helped them in several ways.

7. Notes

The Orientation Camp is part of curricular innovation at MGIMS, Sevagram. It is important that it is viewed in totality together with other curricular innovations.

