

PP 13 - Perceptions of academics at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo on online teaching during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic

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Introduction: This study explored the perceptions of academics on online teaching experience during the first COVID-19 lockdown.

Methods: Following ethics approval, a self-administered, web-based questionnaire was emailed to academics of Colombo Medical Faculty in August 2020. Those who conducted online teaching were invited to participate. Data analysis used descriptive statistics.

Results: 52 academics responded. Majority were females (62%, n=32), and senior lecturers (50%, n=26). Most utilized online activities were real-time zoom small-group activities (96%, n=50) and lectures (82%, n=43), mostly using Wifi (81%, n=42), and personal devices (98%, n=51). Majority (90%, n=47) utilized the learning management system (LMS) to upload pre-recorded lectures (75%, n=39). Majority possessed skills in delivering (96%, n=50), inviting participants for (81%, n=42) and pre-recording (60%, n=31) zoom lectures, audio recording of presentations (77%, n=40) and uploading material to LMS (62%, n=32), but desired further training in troubleshooting, developing online quizzes, Microsoft teams and Google classrooms. Most had personal IT devices (71%, n=37), training workshops (83%, n=43) and technical support (52%, n=27) by university, but requested continuous technical support (54%, n=28). Main obstacles for academics were poor internet connectivity (62%, n=32) and small file size allowed for LMS uploads (67%, n=35). Majority were satisfied with online teaching (77%, n=40) and desired its continuation (73%, n=38), especially real-time zoom lectures (63%, n=33) and online assignments (54%, n=28). Majority provided student feedback (54%, n=28), via email (75%, n=21/28) or group chats (84%, n=18/28). 46% (n=24) received student feedback, identifying real-time (70%, n=17/24) or pre-recorded (58%, n=14/24) zoom lectures as preferred by students, but poor internet connectivity (92%, n=48), insufficient data (52%, n=27) and lack of devices (52%, n=27) being obstacles.

Conclusions: Despite minimal preparedness, most academics had adapted fast to online-teaching. Provision of better internet connectivity and devices to staff and students, and IT skills training and support for academics would optimize online delivery of the curriculum. Continuation of online with onsite teaching is likely to open up better vistas for education.

Keywords: Online teaching, medical education, academic perceptions

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