



## Original Research Article

# EYE DONATION AWARENESS AMONGST STUDENTS OF A MEDICAL COLLEGE AND ALLIED UNIVERSITY IN URBAN CENTRAL INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** To study and make a comparative analysis on knowledge, attitude, and practice pattern regarding eye donation amongst MBBS, BDS, Homeopathy and Nursing students in a tertiary care medical college hospital in Central India.

**Materials and Methods:** It is a population based cross sectional study involving 369 MBBS & Paramedical students. A structured questionnaire including 21 questions divided in three sections assessing knowledge, attitude and practice pattern is noted. Chi square test is done for dependent and independent variables. Test performed at 95% confidence interval with p value <0.05 considered statistically significant.

**Results:** Mean knowledge score was  $3.875 \pm 2.185$ . MBBS students had a mean score of 5.150 (SD = 1.400, range 1-9) indicating a higher level of knowledge than other medical courses. Knowledge score among nursing students was the least 2.180 (SD = 2.222, range 0-7). Willingness to donate eyes also showed a significant association with knowledge ( $\chi^2=371.471$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

**Conclusion:** MBBS students had better knowledge than paramedic students. Higher knowledge is linked to positive attitude towards eye donation. The practice pattern regarding pledging is poor in all the students. Thus, structured eye donation awareness programmes targeting medical and paramedical students are recommended.

**Keywords:** Eye Donation; Medical students; Corneal Blindness; Corneal Transplant; Awareness.

## INTRODUCTION

Corneal Blindness is a leading cause of blindness in the world and in India. Of the burden of global blindness, blindness due to corneal pathologies is about 5%, only less than cataract and glaucoma.<sup>[1]</sup> Although major chunk of corneal blindness can be prevented with early diagnosis and proper treatment, once the corneal blindness has set in Corneal transplant remains the main treatment option.<sup>[2]</sup> Corneal donation is of utmost importance in India as India has the largest number of people with corneal blindness across the globe.<sup>[3]</sup> Despite of continuous efforts from Govt of India there remains a huge gap between the demand and supply of corneal tissue. Estimated procurement of donor cornea is around

49,000 per year and estimated donor tissue required for transplant is around 2,77,000 per year.<sup>[4,5,6]</sup> Different studies cite factors for this discrepancy which are varied in nature, ranging from lack of awareness, social and religious beliefs or simply lack of motivation.

Our study is a comparative study between students of MBBS, BDS, Homeopathy, Nursing to assess their attitude and awareness towards eye donation. This group is chosen as these students will serve as the most important motivating factor for the entire population. Lack of awareness and prejudices regarding eye donation in medical and allied fraternity will reflect in the society and thus there is need to address it urgently. There is scarcity of comparative studies on eye donation awareness

among medical and allied fields in Central India. The responses are expected to guide us for future health campaigns.

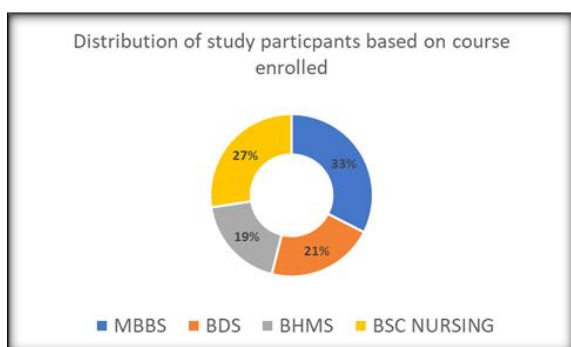
## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This is a population-based cross-sectional study, involving MBBS, BDS, Homeopathy and Nursing students affiliated to university in central India. The questionnaire includes technical, social and legal aspects of eye donation. The total number of questions is 21. They are divided into three parts, questions for assessing knowledge, questions for assessing attitude and lastly questions for assessing practice pattern towards Eye donation. Knowledge scores were calculated for technical questions. A total of 369 participants were included with approximate equal proportions from each group. The questionnaires were distributed in hard copy in their classrooms. Informed written consent was taken. 20 minutes were allotted to complete the questionnaire.

Categorical data is expressed in percentages and proportions. A Chi-square test is used to look for significant associations between independent variables. Dependant variables like knowledge and attitude assessed by Chi – square test. All tests are performed at 95% C.I. and  $p < 0.05$  is considered statistically significant.

## RESULTS

A total of 369 participants were included in the study out of which 164 were males and 205 were females. Mean age of the study participants  $20.5 \pm 1.8$  years (Range 18-26 years).



**Figure 1: Course wise distribution of the students based on course enrolled**

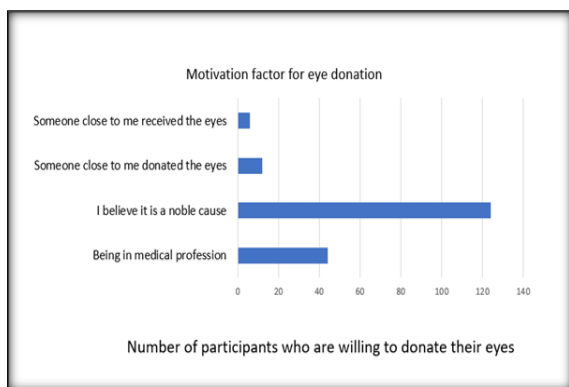
The study revealed significant differences in knowledge about eye donation across medical courses. MBBS students consistently showed the highest awareness and correct knowledge, especially regarding consent, the optimal time for tissue retrieval, and eye tissue preservation. BDS students also demonstrated relatively high awareness, but less than MBBS students. BHMS and Nursing students exhibited the least knowledge, with Nursing students being the most unaware. Teachers

were the primary information source for MBBS students, while media was more influential for BDS, BHMS, and Nursing students. Significant gaps were noted in understanding eye donation procedures and regulations, particularly among Nursing and BHMS students. [Table 2]

We also calculated knowledge score wherein participants were asked 12 technical questions, with each correct answer scoring 1 point and incorrect answers scoring 0, resulting in an overall knowledge score of  $3.875 \pm 2.185$ . The analysis of scores by gender showed that males had a mean score of 3.988 with a standard deviation of 2.060, and scores ranging from 0 to 8. Females had a slightly lower mean score of 3.784, a higher standard deviation of 2.281, and scores ranging from 0 to 9. These results suggest that while the average knowledge about eye donation is slightly higher in males, the variability in knowledge is greater among females.

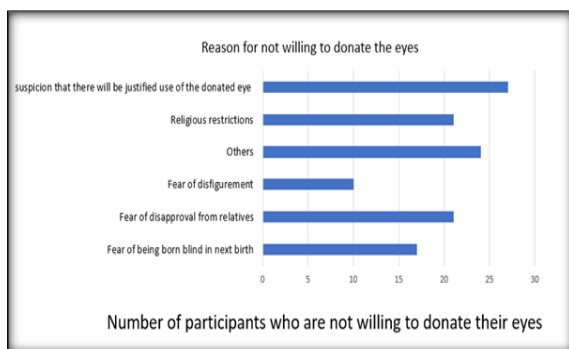
MBBS participants had the highest mean score of 5.150 (SD = 1.400, range 1-9), indicating a relatively high and consistent level of knowledge. BDS participants followed with a mean score of 4.241 (SD = 1.504, range 0-8), showing moderate knowledge with some variability. BHMS participants had a mean score of 3.696 (SD = 2.296, range 0-7), indicating more varied and generally lower knowledge. Nursing participants had the lowest mean score of 2.180 (SD = 2.222, range 0-7), suggesting the least knowledge and highest variability among the groups.

The study examining knowledge of eye donation revealed significant associations between knowledge levels and specific variables. Gender did not show a significant association with knowledge ( $\chi^2=2.677$ ,  $p=0.262$ ), with both males and females exhibiting similar distributions of no, poor, and good knowledge. In contrast, the course enrolled was significantly associated with knowledge levels ( $\chi^2=133.758$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), with MBBS students displaying the highest levels of good knowledge, followed by BDS, BHMS, and Nursing students, who had the least. Willingness to donate eyes also showed a significant association with knowledge ( $\chi^2=371.471$ ,  $p<0.001$ ); all participants willing to donate eyes had some knowledge, while those unsure had no knowledge. Other background factors like religion, parents' education status, and parents occupation were not found to be significantly associated with knowledge levels. [Table 3]



**Figure 2: Motivation factor for eye donation**

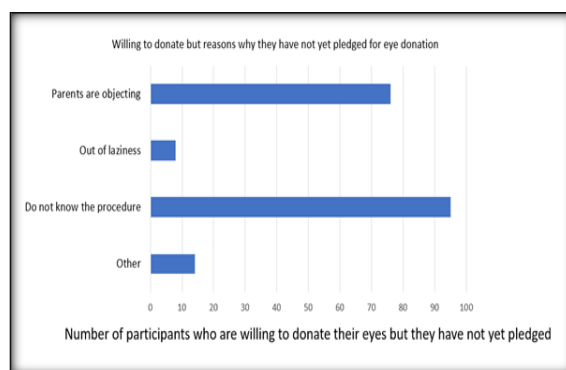
The majority of participants indicated that their primary motivation to donate eyes was because they viewed it as a noble cause. The second most common reason was their affiliation with the medical profession, which instilled a sense of responsibility and awareness. This was followed by personal experiences, such as having a family member who had donated eyes, which further inspired them to consider eye donation. [Figure 2]



**Figure 3: Reason for not willing to donate the eyes**

Reasons for not being willing to donate eyes are depicted in Figure 3. The majority of participants expressed suspicion about whether their donated

eyes would be used for a justified cause. Other reasons included religious beliefs, fear of disfigurement, disapproval from relatives, and fears related to being born blind in the next birth. Those who expressed willingness for eye donation were asked whether they pledged for eye donation and among those (n=182) only one participant from the MBBS group had pledged for eye donation, while the majority across all groups, totalling 181 participants, had not pledged. This highlights a significant disparity in pledge rates among medical students across various disciplines.



**Figure 4: Reasons for participants who are willing to donate their eyes but they have not yet pledged**

In Figure 4, the reasons cited by participants who are willing to donate their eyes but have not yet pledged are detailed. The most common reason reported was lack of knowledge about the procedure or process involved in pledging. Another frequent barrier was objection from parents or family members. Less commonly mentioned reasons included procrastination due to laziness and various other factors contributing to hesitation or delay in making the pledge for eye donation.

**Table 1: Sociodemographic profile of the study participants**

Sr No.		MBBS(%)	BDS(%)	BHMS(%)	BSC NURSING(%)	TOTAL(%)	
1	Age	>20	11 (8.9)	07(5.6)	07(5.6)	99(79.9)	124(100)
		≤20	109(44.4)	72(29.3)	62(25.3)	02(0.8)	245
2	Gender	Male	60(36.5)	37(22.5)	49(29.8)	18(10.9)	164
		Female	60(29.2)	42(20.4)	20(9.75)	83(40.4)	205
3	Religion	Hinduism	112(33.1)	70(20.7)	61(18.04)	95(28.1)	338
		Islam	05(21.7)	06(26.08)	07(30.4)	05(21.7)	23
		Other	03(37.5)	03(37.5)	01(12.5)	01(12.5)	08
4	Fathers' education	Illiterate	03(7.5)	00	01(2.5)	00	04
		Primary school	06(2.5)	00	04(16.6)	14(58.3)	24
		High school	24(24.2)	16(16.1)	15(15.15)	44(44.4)	99
		Graduate and above	88(36.2)	63(25.9)	49(20.16)	43(17.16)	243
5	Mothers' education	Illiterate	03(7.5)	00	01(2.5)	00	04
		Primary school	21(43.75)	05(10.4)	04(8.33)	18(37.5)	48
		High school	28(27.7)	09(8.9)	26(25.7)	38(37.6)	101
		Graduate and above	68(31.4)	65(30.09)	38(17.5)	45(20.08)	216
5	Fathers' Occupation	Unskilled	02(100)	00	00	00	02
		Skilled	07(35)	05(25)	03(15)	05(25)	20
		Farmer	25(33.3)	09(12)	09(12)	32(42.6)	75

		Business	51(37.2)	14(10.2)	28(20.4)	44(32.11)	137
		Professional	35(25.9)	51(37.7)	29(21.4)	20(14.8)	135
6	Mothers' Occupation	Unskilled	01((50)	00	01(50)	00	02
		Skilled	108(36.7)	74(25.17)	57(19.3)	55(18.7)	294
		Farmer	02(11.1)	00	00	16(88.8)	18
		Business	01(5.55)	01(5.55)	02(11.1)	14(77.7)	18
		Professional	08(21.6)	04(10.8)	09(24.3)	16(43.2)	37
		Homemaker					

**Table 2: Response to knowledge-based questions**

		MBBS(%)	BDS(%)	BHMS(%)	NURSING(%)	Total(%)	SIGNIFICANCE
Question 1. Have you heard about eye donation?	Yes	118 (38.8)	78 (25.6)	54(17.8)	54(17.8)	304(100)	$\chi^2=94.598^{\#}$ p <0.001*
	No	02(3.07)	01(1.53)	15(23.07)	47(72.3)	65	
Question 2. From where did you first learn about eye donation?	Teachers	56(57.7)	17(17.5)	22(22.6)	02(2.06)	97	$\chi^2=76.2^{\#}$ p <0.000001*
	Relatives and Friends	09(31.03)	16(55.17)	04(37.9)	00	29	
	Media	34(28.8)	37(31.3)	21(17.7)	26(22.03)	118	
Question 3. According to you can eye be taken from a living human being if he/she is willing to do so?	Awareness programs	20(33.3)	07(11.6)	07(11.6)	26(44.3)	60	$\chi^2=116.802^{\#}$ p <0.001*
	Yes	84(35)	67(27.9)	47(19.5)	42(17.5)	240	
	No	36(55.3)	11(16.9)	07(10.7)	11(16.9)	65	
Question 4. What is the optimal time after death before which eye tissue can be retrieved from the donor?	<6 hours	81(44.5)	49(26.9)	30(16.48)	22(12.08)	182	$\chi^2=126.271^{\#}$ p <0.001*
	Up to 24 hours	34(33.0)	22(21.3)	16(15.5)	31(30.0)	103	
	Up to 72 hours	05(40)	07(35)	08(40)	00	20	
	Don't Know	00	01(1.56)	15(23.4)	48(75)	64	
Question 5. Is consent in written form mandatory prior to death for retrieval of eyes from the donor?	Yes	114(44.18)	70(27.13)	37(14.3)	37(14.3)	258	$\chi^2=134.265^{\#}$ p <0.001*
	No	06(12.7)	08(17.02)	17(36.17)	16(34.0)	47	
	Don't Know	00	01(1.56)	15(23.4)	48(75)	64	
Question 6. If the near relatives of the donor refuse for donation even if the deceased has submitted the consent prior to death, can you retrieve the eyes from the donor?	Yes	53(32.9)	56(34.7)	25(15.5)	27(16.77)	161	$\chi^2=123.274^{\#}$ p <0.001*
	No	67(46.5)	22(15.2)	29(20.13)	26(18.05)	144	
	Don't Know	00	01(1.56)	15(23.4)	48(75)	64	
Question 7. If no written consent is available from the deceased donor but the near relatives are willing to donate the eyes of the deceased, can you retrieve the eyes?	Yes	65(38.6)	51(30.3)	24(14.2)	28(16.6)	168	$\chi^2=110.982^{\#}$ p <0.001*
	No	55(40.14)	27(19.70)	30(21.8)	25(18.24)	137	
	Don't Know	00	01(1.56)	15(23.4)	48(75)	64	
Question 8. Is monetary compensation (money) given to the family of the donor in return for eye donation?	Yes	43(29.6)	45(31.03)	26(17.9)	31(21.3)	145	$\chi^2=106.765^{\#}$ p <0.001*
	No	74(47.7)	32(20.6)	28(18.0)	21(13.5)	155	
	Don't Know	03(4.34)	02(2.89)	15(21.73)	49(71.0)	69	
Question 9. Which tissue of eye is transplanted from the donor in eye donation?	Complete eye	08(11.9)	28(41.7)	17(25.3)	14(20.89)	67	$\chi^2=155.644^{\#}$ p <0.001*
	Lens	10(30.30)	05(15.15)	08(24.24)	10(30.30)	33	
	Cornea	99(51.03)	43(22.16)	26(13.40)	26(13.40)	194	
	Vitreous	00	01(16.6)	02(33.3)	03(50.0)	06	
	Retina	03(60)	01(20)	01(20)	00	05	
	Don't know	01(1.56)	02(3.125)	15(23.4)	48(75)	64	

Question 10. Which tissue we remove from the donor for eye donation?	Complete eye ball	15(16.6)	35(38.8)	14(15.5)	26(28.8)	90	$\chi^2=168.721^{\#}$ p <0.001*
	Corneoscleral button	83(52.2)	32(20.12)	17(10.69)	27(16.98)	159	
	Either of the above two	22(39.2)	11(19.6)	23(41.07)	00	56	
	Don't know	00	01(15.6)	15(23.4)	48(75)	64	
Question 11. For eye tissue preservation do we need some medium solution?	Yes	54(35.5)	39(25.6)	24(15.78)	35(23.02)	152	$\chi^2=5.850$ p =0.119
	No	66(30.41)	40(18.4)	45(20.7)	66(30.4)	217	
Question 12. If donated eyes are not found suited for eye transplant, can they be taken for research purposes after consent?	Yes	114(43.34)	69(26.2)	47(17.8)	33(12.5)	263	$\chi^2=130.627^{\#}$ p <0.001*
	No	06(14.28)	09(21.4)	07(16.6)	20(47.6)	42	
	Don't Know	00	01(15.6)	15(23.4)	48(75)	64	
Question 13. Is Refractive error (specs) in donor a contraindication for eye donation?	Yes	59(33.9)	50(28.73)	27(15.5)	38(21.8)	174	$\chi^2=114.085^{\#}$ p <0.001*
	No	61(46.5)	28(21.37)	27(20.6)	15(11.4)	131	
	Don't Know	00	01(15.6)	15(23.4)	48(75)	64	
Question 14. Is serology test (blood test) for HIV, Hep B in donor done prior to eye transplantation?	Yes	79(39.3)	63(31.3)	26(12.9)	33(16.4)	201	$\chi^2=117.487^{\#}$ p <0.001*
	No	40(38.8)	15(14.5)	28(27.18)	20(19.4)	103	
	Don't Know	01(15.3)	01(15.3)	15(23.0)	48(73.8)	65	
Question 15. Is there any eye bank in your state	Yes	56(46.6)	21(17.5)	15(12.5)	28(23.3)	120	$\chi^2=119.244^{\#}$ p <0.001*
	No	64(38.7)	57(30.8)	39(21.0)	25(13.5)	185	
	Don't Know	00	01(15.6)	15(23.4)	48(75.0)	64	

\*Statistical significance p<0.05; # Yates's continuity correction applied

**Table 3: Association of pertinent variables with knowledge**

		No Knowledge(%)	Poor Knowledge(%)	Good knowledge(%)	Total(%)	SIGNIFICANCE
Gender	Male	23(14.0)	106(64.6)	35(21.3)	164 (100)	$\chi^2=2.677$ p 0.262
	Female	41(20)	118(57.5)	46(22.4)	205	
Courses enrolled	MBBS	00	70(58.3)	50(41.6)	120	$\chi^2=133.758$ p <0.001*
	BDS	01(1.26)	66(83.5)	12(15.18)	79	
	BHMS	15(21.7)	39(56.5)	15(21.7)	69	
	NURSING	48(47.5)	49(48.5)	04(3.9)	101	
Willingness to donate eyes	Yes	0	129(70.4)	54(29.5)	183	$\chi^2=371.471$ p <0.001*
	No	0	95(77.8)	27(22.13)	122	
	Not sure	64(100)	0	0	64	

\*Statistical significance p<0.05; # Yates's continuity correction applied

**Table 4: Response to attitude-based questions. (add percentage)**

		MBBS	BDS	BHMS	NURSING	Total(%)	SIGNIFICANCE
Question 1. According to you is there a scarcity of donor eyes in relation to the requirement in India?	Yes	101(42.4)	60(25.2)	36(15.12)	41(17.2)	238(100)	$\chi^2=111.644$ p <0.001*
	No	19(28.3)	18(26.8)	18(26.8)	12(17.9)	67	
	Not sure	00	01(14.7)	15(22.0)	48(70.5)	68	
Question 2. Are you willing to donate your eyes?	Yes	84(45.9)	46(25.13)	21(11.4)	32(17.4)	183	$\chi^2=120.114$ p <0.001*
	No	36(29.5)	32(26.2)	33(27.0)	21(17.2)	122	
	Not sure	00	01(15.6)	15(23.4)	48(75)	64	

\*Statistical significance p<0.05; # Yates's continuity correction applied

## DISCUSSION

Most cases of corneal blindness are treatable by corneal transplant. Numerous advances in keratoplasty like DSEK, DMEK, DALK etc. have

revolutionized management of corneal blindness. But the real success of corneal transplantation program is dependent on voluntary eye donation. Thus, to increase eye donation, proper knowledge and positive attitude in public and medical fraternity

is extremely important. In our study parents' education status, parent's occupation and students' religion had no role in their knowledge and attitude. In few studies by Paraz CM et al,<sup>[7]</sup> & Yew Y et al,<sup>[8]</sup> they reported that Muslims are less willing to donate cornea than other communities. In our study there was disproportionate representation of religions which might have influenced the results.

In present study, almost all MBBS and BDS students have heard about eye donation, but around 20% BHMS & 50% Nursing students had no clue about it. This in contrast to a study by Gupta A et al,<sup>[9]</sup> who reported that 85% of nursing students were either registered donors or were willing for donation. Yadav SK et al,<sup>[10]</sup> also reported a high level of knowledge among nursing students in his study. Like our study Parija S et al,<sup>[11]</sup> and Chowdhury RK et al,<sup>[12]</sup> from Eastern India and Janti S et al,<sup>[13]</sup> from Southern India also reported higher knowledge in MBBS students than Nursing and Paramedics.

Major section of students across all the courses knew that only cornea is transplanted and optimal time after death for retrieval of eyes is less than 6 hours but to our surprise 60% of all students believed that living humans can also donate the eyes. Knowledge regarding role of family in consent is also poor. Many students also think that monetary compensation is given in return for eye donation. Thus, not only the medical aspects but a clear understanding of legal issues pertaining to eye donation should be included and emphasized in teaching and learning programme.

The main source of information were teachers in case of MBBS students followed by social media and mass media. Media was the primary source of information in case of paramedic students. Social media is a source of information along with a lot of misinformation, does have a chance to misguide rather than giving a positive impact. Majority studies report mass media and public campaigns as the major source of information and thus these can be further exploited in creating awareness.<sup>[9,14,15,16,17]</sup>

In the current study more MBBS students (70%) were willing to donate the eyes than paramedics. In spite of low knowledge among Nursing students their willingness to donate eyes was almost like MBBS (60%). The willingness for eye donation in our study was much greater than many Indian and International studies such as by Sirisha R et al,<sup>[18]</sup> (64%), Rattan A et al,<sup>[19]</sup> (33%), Janti S et al,<sup>[13]</sup> (33%), Parija S et al,<sup>[11]</sup> (47.3%), Lal B et al,<sup>[14]</sup> (42.6%), Paraz CM,<sup>[7]</sup> from Singapore (31%), Eze BI20 from Nigeria (15%), Bharti MK,<sup>[21]</sup> from Malaysia (27%) and Afshar R,<sup>[22]</sup> from Iran (67.5%). Study by Chowdhury RK et al,<sup>[12]</sup> (88% in MBBS and 79.1 % Nursing) showed even higher inclination towards eye donation. In the present study irrespective of the willingness to donate the eyes only one student has pledged for eye donation, the reason reported by majority students was lack of knowledge of the procedure followed by objection

from family. This discrepancy between the attitude and practice pattern needs to be addressed.

## CONCLUSION

We found that knowledge of MBBS students was much higher than paramedics. Nursing students are the spine of healthcare system, but it was saddening to see such low level of awareness in them. The mismatch between the positive attitude to donate the eyes and its practice pattern in terms of pledging is a matter of concern. We recommend educational programmes at college level dedicated to medical and paramedical students. We also advocate for increased participation and involvement of medical students in community-based eye donation awareness campaigns.

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