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Research Article

**POPULATION AWARENESS ABOUT THE ROLE OF FAMILY
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Abstract**Background:**

Family medicine is a discipline that involves several medical specialties. Family physicians represent the core of the primary health care, their functions include providing care and deal with population regardless age, sex and disease.

Aim: To assess the awareness of community about the family physicians.

Methods: The study was performed using an online survey, the survey included 3 parts to investigate; demographics, views and perception of participants toward family physicians.

Results: There were 57.4% males and 42.6% females, 42.6% were in age group of 20-29 years old and 14.9% were in fifty and older. There were 46.8% reported visiting family physicians on feeling chest pain, 85.1% and 84% reported that family physicians are well mannered and conduct proper examination respectively. There were 46.8% stated that family physicians are needed for treatment of common problems.

Conclusion: There was a good view of participants on family physicians, but there was low perception.

Keywords: Family physicians, Awareness, Perception, Saudi Arabia, Family medicine.

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INTRODUCTION:

Family medicine (FM) is a discipline that incorporates several medical specialties into one specialty. It is known as primary care, general practice and family practice [1]. Family medicine is increasing and growing [2,3]. FM was recognized in 1969 in US [4], in US in 20 years, it has been grown more than 2 and half folds [5], whereas in Arab world, family medicine develops slower than other medical specialties [6]. Family medicine was started in KSA in early 1980s in military hospital in Riyadh, the fellowship program in family medicine was started in both King Faisal University and King Saud University [7]. The Arab board was started in 1991, the it was followed by Saudi board in 1995[8]. Family physicians are the core of the primary health care in any health care facility [9]. The functions of family physicians in primary, secondary and tertiary care facilities include being specialist clinician who provides care and first contact with all individuals in the population with any sex, age and diseases. The family physician can manage multiple problems in the same patient and manage unidentified illness [10]. The family physician is also specialist in providing care to the person totally by taking care of mental, social, physical and spiritual health [11]. The aim of this study is to investigate the awareness of community about the role of family physicians.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS:

This study was conducted via an online survey to reach the possible number of participants in the community. The study was conducted between the period from August to September 2018. The survey included three parts; the first included questions about demographics of participants, the second investigated the view of participants on characteristics of family physicians and the third part investigated the perception of individuals on the need for family physicians. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze data. Number and percents were used to represent the data.

RESULTS:

The present study included 470 individuals, males were more dominant than females; 270(57.4%) Vs 200(42.6%) respectively. Individuals with age range of 20-29 years old were more dominant among other age groups 200(42.6%). Married individuals represent more than half of participants 300(63.8%) as well as graduated individuals 290(61.7%). The majority were employed 410(87.2%). Less than half of participants 220(46.8%) reported that they will visit family physician if they have chest pain, where as 79(16.8%) and 171(36.4%) reported cardiologists and chest specialists respectively (table1).

Table1: Demographics of participants

Characteristics of participants	N(%)
Gender	
Male	270(57.4%)
Female	200(42.6%)
Age	
20-29	200(42.6%)
30-39	125(26.6%)
40-49	75(15.9%)
≥50	70(14.9%)
Marital status	
Single	155(33%)
Married	300(63.8%)
Widow	5(1.1%)
Divorced	10(2.1%)
Educational level	
Secondary	76(16.2%)
College	104(22.1%)
Graduated	290(61.7%)
Work	
Employed	410(87.2%)
Unemployed	60(12.8%)
If you have chest pain, you will visit	
Family physician	220(46.8%)
Cardiologist	79(16.8%)
Chest specialist	171(36.4%)

The views of participants on the characteristics of family physicians are shown in table2. The majority of participants 400(85.1%) and 395(84%) reported that family physicians are well mannered and conduct proper physical examinations respectively, while more than half 290(61.7%), 260(55.3%), 250(53.2%), 245(52.1%) and 245(52.1%) reported that family

physicians provide good treatment, are understanding, knowledgeable, familiar with family history and available when needed respectively. The least characters reported were being tolerant and patient as well as enjoy good reputation 110(23.4%) and 105(22.3%) respectively. Only 10(2.1%) reported that they don't know.

Table2: Views of participants on characteristics of family physicians

Characteristics of Family Physicians	N(%)
Are well-mannered	400(85.1%)
Conduct proper physical examinations	395(84%)
Provide good treatment	290(61.7%)
Are caring	200(42.6%)
Are understanding	260(55.3%)
Are knowledgeable	250(53.2%)
Are familiar with Family History	245(52.1%)
Are available when needed	245(52.1%)
Provide cost effective care	210(44.7%)
Can treat general problems	205(43.6%)
Are friendly	205(43.6%)
Able to treat entire family	198(42.1%)
Are able to provide emergency care	179(38.1%)
Are cooperative	178(37.9%)
Are trustworthy	169(35.9%)
Can satisfy patients	150(31.9%)
Patients can have confidence in them	150(31.9%)
Are religious	145(30.8%)
Are honest	142(30.2%)
Are tolerant and patient	110(23.4%)
Enjoy good reputation	105(22.3%)
Don't know	10(2.1%)

The perception of participants is shown in table3. There was low perception among participants, there was no item selected by half of participants. There

were 220(46.8%) and 208(44.2%) reported that family physicians are needed for treatment of common problems and saving patient's time.

Table3: Perceptions on need for Family Physicians

Family Physicians are needed for	N(%)
Treatment of common Problems	220(46.8%)
Saving patient's time	208(44.2%)
Referring to other Specialists	199(42.3%)
Easy availability	175(37.2%)
Familiarity with Family Histories	175(37.2%)
Providing emergency care	112(23.8%)
Accurate and fast diagnosis	108(22.9%)
Providing helpful Physicians	107(22.8%)
Providing Friendly atmosphere	99(21.1%)
Providing Understanding	79(16.8%)
Providing Caring attitude	76(16.2%)
Physicians sensitive to culture	55(11.7%)
Physicians who are Patient	45(9.6%)

DISCUSSION:

As far as we know this the first Saudi study to assess the awareness of individuals about the family physicians. The present study included 57.4% males, 63.8% married individuals, 61.7% graduated. Most dominant age group represented 42.6% and it included those with age range of 20-29 years old. The majority 87.2% was working. There were 46.8% have chosen family physicians to visit if they have chest pain, this low percent may reflect the limited knowledge of participants about the role of family physicians and what they can provide. The same was reported by a previous study [12] where 56% of participants reported visiting family physicians if feeling chest pain, while 44% reported special physician. In the current study, there was a good views on characteristics of family medicine, the majorities 85.1% and 84% reported that family physicians are well mannered and conduct proper physical examinations, more than half reported that they provide good treatment, are understanding, knowledgeable, familiar with family history and available when needed. The least characters reported by participants were being tolerant and patient as well as enjoy good reputation. The findings of a previous study [12] were contrary to ours, where few participants showed good views on family physicians. The present study revealed that the perception of population about family physicians was low, there was no item for those investigated about the need for family physicians reached half, the highest percent was the need of family physicians for treatment of common problems. However, these findings are better than that reported by a previous study [12], where the highest percent was also for the same item "treatment of common problems", but the percent was 33%.

CONCLUSION:

There were good views on family physicians, however there was low perception, increasing the knowledge of population about the role and functions of family physicians is necessary. Further studies are very recommended to include larger sample size.

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