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### **Stress and coping among final year medical students of Sri Lanka**

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Student stress is common in medical education, and it often exerts a negative effect on their academic performance and physical and psychological wellbeing. These negative effects are associated with not only the study period, but also their future, when they are practising as physicians. Stress levels are high during the final year of study, as students have to deal with the pressure of graduating and making career decisions. Therefore the general objective of this cross sectional study was to examine the prevalence of stress among the final year medical students of Sri Lanka through the specific objectives of assessing the levels of stress, analyzing the sources of stress, and the coping strategies used by them to overcome the stress. This study was carried out among 180 final year medical students of University of Peradeniya, University of Kelaniya and University of Rajarata. Two stage stratified random sampling was practised to select respondents. Perceived stress was assessed using the perceived stress scale. The Professional Student Stress Survey was used to measure factors of stress and Carver's Brief COPE was used to identify the coping strategies. A majority of the sample recorded a moderate degree of stress. As factors of stress, academic pressures, personal issues, professional identity, and avoidant based coping strategies showed positive correlations ( $P < 0.1$ ) with the perceived stress of students. Academic performance (CGPA) and emotion based coping strategies have ( $P < 0.1$ ) negative correlations ( $P < 0.1$ ) with the perceived stress. There was no significant difference of stress found among the universities ( $P < 0.1$ ). Also this study found no statistically significant difference of stress between genders ( $P < 0.1$ ). With reference to coping strategies, there was no difference between males and females ( $P < 0.1$ ). The findings indicate the necessity for stress management programs in the medical faculties of Sri Lanka.

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