

58. **COMPARISON OF MULTINATIONAL MEDICAL SCHOOL STUDENTS EXPERIENCES IN THE FACE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS.**

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INTRODUCTION: In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries, and governments around the world have implemented different measures and guidelines for the containment and mitigation of the COVID-19 virus. In addition to implemented policies and initiatives, social media and personal beliefs have affected medical students' social, emotional, financial, and academic stability and success both domestically and internationally. The objective of this study was to assess medical student's perspectives, attitudes, and insight in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and determine if differences exist between countries. **METHODS:** This qualitative study, recruited students enrolled in the Global Seminar for Health and environment elective course in their respective medical schools to complete a weekly, non-graded journaling assignment for 6 weeks. To measure outcomes, open-ended questions within the assignment asked students across four different countries questions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic including personal beliefs and knowledge, policies and initiatives within their country, global policies and initiatives, and social media presentations. Thematic analysis was then completed using the QCoder package in R Studio. **RESULTS:** Both internationally and in the US, COVID-19 has had a large impact on medical students; however, their perspectives are distinct in personal beliefs, policies, and social media. International medical students believed that their country's COVID-19 response contained more restrictions than the global response, with the theme being expressed in 11 of 67 responses (16.4%) compared to 1 of 75 responses (1.3%) of US responses. This was enforced by the US medical students' views that the US had fewer COVID-19 restrictions. US medical students had a higher number of responses with the theme "more restrictions internationally" which was present in 21 of 75 responses (28%). US medical students were more likely to express a decrease in the number of academic opportunities and academic performance. The theme "decrease in academic opportunities and performance" was present in 15 of 75 US responses (20%) compared to 9 of 67 international responses (13.4%). A US response containing this theme was as follows: "I have had to adjust to a new way of doing school, mainly online, as well as coming to terms with the fact that I am not getting to experience many of the social aspects of medical school that I was looking forward to."The US responses showed less of a mental health impact and expressed stronger negative views on how

COVID-19 was handled with 40 of 75 US responses (53.3%) reporting the theme "need better initiatives and policies. **CONCLUSION:** The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect medical students globally. The current study was limited by responses and student participation each week. Future studies aimed at analyzing specific COVID-19 policies around the world and the extent of the pandemic's impact on mental health may provide greater insight into medical students' beliefs, attitudes, and well-being which have been challenged over the last year. Regardless, it must be acknowledged that the medical school experience has changed for both international and United States medical students and affected them not only academically but mentally, socially, and financially.

Table. United States and International Medical Students Themes and Responses.

Question	Theme	Country (Theme response rate)	Examples
Personal Beliefs and Knowledge	Decrease in Academic Opportunities and Performance	International (.145)	"In a personal level it affected me since I was finishing my internship at the beginning of the pandemic when precautions were taken to prevent COVID 19 infections, I could observe a remarkable decrease of patients in the hospital, decreasing the opportunity to learn and provide medical care."
		United States (.20)	"It has effected my medical school experience significantly as we had online classes for months and months."
Personal Beliefs and Knowledge	Mental Health Impact	International (.273)	"My anxiety and panic have risen to such levels that it is hard for me to tolerate casual touch and proximity. I dont remeber the last time I hugged a friend."
		United States (.017)	"The COVID pandemic has increased my already heightened stressed induced by medical school studies."
Policies and Initiatives	Individuals show a lack of regard	International (.444)	"People have stopped the fear of COVID and do not respect the measures"
		United States (.175)	"My frustration that the COVID pandemic has gotten so bad is with the people who refused to be smart and take simple steps for the good of others even if it was a minor inconvenience to them."
Policies and Initiatives Internationally	More Restrictions Internationally	International (.075)	"With what respects other countries is that most have taken more biosecurity measures on their own to protect their citizens, from what I can say about their information is that they have been able to obtain better results in the case of European countries as Americans, among others who enjoy a good economic as well as social situation, etc., compared to other third world countries"
		United States (.288)	"I know some countries in Europe took stricter precautions at the beginning of the pandemic, as well as some countries in Asia (like China). For example, I have a ton of family in Italy and the precautions that they took were significantly more regulated than here in the US."
Policies and Initiatives Internationally	Less Restrictions Internationally	International (.170)	"There's is many variations of the preventions countries might have, but I think there is many things such as mask obligation that should be applied, as well to put an obligated quarantine to people that has been expose in the past days."
		United States (.017)	"I have friends in different countries where there are nearly no restrictions at all."
Social Media Presentations	Mental Health Impact	International (.222)	"I think national news outlets have remained true to the facts, so it does get very overwhelming at times. I've had to consciously limit my exposure to the informations shared through these platforms in order to preserve my mental health. Nowadays, I feel like I'm used to it. It's everything and I see and everything I hear."
		United States (.085)	"I personally became very overwhelmed by the death tolls being released everyday on social media, for a period of time I had to step back from social media because it was very sad."

Key words: COVID-19; Medical Student; Mental Health; Academic Performance.