HIGHER MEDICAL EDUCATION IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ERA ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Abstract. The article presents the experience of distance learning for students of the International Higher School, describes the positive and negative aspects, shows the results of a survey among students and gives recommendations based on the identified needs. Of course, the remote format can be considered as a reasonable alternative to traditional training in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, given the low risk of infection.

Keywords: distance learning, pandemic, higher medical education.
Today, in the context of the global pandemic covid-19, there is a crisis in the system of higher medical education in Kyrgyzstan. Foreign students have left to their countries and are afraid to return to study. Anxiety and fear are easier to survive at home [3].

In a situation where borders are closed and there is still a ban on holding public events including in the education system, distance learning has remained almost the only way to get an education [2]. In the era of the corona virus pandemic distance education has become the only opportunity for the students to return to their studies. The pandemic first of all has put the educational institutions in difficult conditions, forcing in the shortest possible time to adapt to the current events, spend significant funds for accelerated digitalization, make decisions often without taking into account the possible consequences. Universities found themselves forced to solve many pressing issues in a short time: the forms in which to carry out distance learning; what technical means to use for this; how to assess the understanding of the received material by students; how to conduct final exams and how to recruit for the next academic year. Distance learning is a combination of technologies that allow students to receive the bulk of the studied information, interactive communication with the teacher during teaching and also allow to carry out independent work to learn the material [4]. Distance learning is currently very popular due to a number of advantages [1]. This is, first of all, the presence of all educational information in one place where each student has free access to content in anywhere and in anytime. It is important that the student learns at an individual way, can skip «familiar» topics or return to questions that caused difficulties by re-viewing the training material. The educational module can be constantly updated which allows to be aware of the latest achievements of science and convey modern and important information; a teacher has the opportunity to modify separate parts of the educational course in accordance with his own, author's ideas about the nature of the material and its relevance [6].

Fortunately, today can be said that many universities have begun to adapt to the global shift towards online learning. [5, 7]. Therefore, today the question of the quality of training future specialists in the conditions of distance education has
become relevant. It is known that a poorly trained doctor in the future can become a source of trouble, right up to death and therefore to look at this process with indifference is at least irresponsible. On the one hand, the conditions are dictated by the current epidemiological situation, which is still remaining tense, on the other hand, it is not known whether students are getting enough education. Especially in the part of practical and communication skills which are difficult to acquire even in the context of traditional teaching methods. The number of foreign students is increasing every year, this trend itself speaks about the success of our national education, not to mention the economic component since almost all of them study on a commercial basis. And in order to meet the required teaching standards the quality of medical education must be at a higher level despite the restrictive measures that have been taken throughout the world. Every effort is being made to do this and it will take time to evaluate the intermediate results.

The accumulation of erudition by students during their studies at a higher educational institution is the great importance in the development of intelligence among them which at the same time forms logical thinking in the future doctor without which successful professional activity is impossible. In this sense, the student’s independent work on the material has the great importance, which, in terms of the amount of information, should exceed the sections of the textbook approved as a study guide. An important factor predisposing to an increase in the creative potential of higher school students is also direct contact with the achievements of scientific and technological progress. It is mainly due to the nature and intensity of research work carried out by employees at a particular department of the university. The sense of imitation among students is highly developed and therefore the personal authority of the head of the department and his assistants - professors, associate professors and assistants, in this process acquires an extremely important role in the student’s choice of the profile of his future career. From the history of domestic and foreign medicine, many examples can be cited that confirm the validity of these words. Personal experience also testifies to this - students who were repeatedly involved in operations became surgeons and even scientists. The search for new ways of research usually begins in their student years through their
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participation in the work of science club. From year to year, this search takes more and more real contours of knowledge of the essence of the pathological process. At this time, they learn the principles of constant work with medical literature, as well as acquire skills for the analysis of clinical material.

One of the main tasks of higher medical education is to improve the training of future doctors practical skills. The essence of this specialty is revealed through the professional mastery of skills and abilities followed by their constant improvement in the process of labor activity. The center of practical skills created in our university, in which students master the most important principles of medical manipulations should play a positive role in this matter, as well as methods of diagnosis and treatment of emergency conditions and diseases. It is worth noting here that the traditional full-time education system has one significant objective limitation which can be overcome only with the help of modern computer and communication technologies. This limitation is due to the fact that due to the limited space of the operating room, diagnostic laboratory, hospital ward, etc. it is impossible for several students to observe in detail the real actions of qualified and experienced doctors at the same time. At the same time, the attention of a practitioner is focused in the operation theater on the patient and explains to students which are present during operations, manipulations and even just an examination should not take him up the main time, which is spent on performing his direct duties - to treat people.

In the formation of future subspecialists, the personal authority of the teacher is exceptional importance. Sometimes this factor becomes crucial in popularizing the relevant discipline. As the higher intellect of a teacher as the more prepared and educated he is, the more students want to be like him which means that the number of successors to his work is growing. Many departments of our university have a large number of good specialists who by personal example help many students to choose the specialty of their future medical practice.

In order to identify the disadvantages and advantages of distance education at the moment, in the context of a pandemic and a massive transition from traditional education to distance education, it was decided to conduct an interview. The respondents were students of the Higher School of Medicine.
respondents were interviewed among students who study online. 33.7% prefer the traditional type of education and 66.3% would like to continue online education. 60.9% rated online learning as satisfactory, 30.4% as average, and 8.7% not satisfied. 86.9 percent of respondents face technical problems during classes; 6.5% have communication problems (language barrier) and 4.3% have pedagogical problems. Based on the results of the interview, the following was revealed: Taking into account the risks of infection, the majority of students prefer to continue their online education until the epidemiological situation improves. A significant number of students are not satisfied with the online classes, and also a large number of students are faced with technical problems.

A significant number of higher school teachers with extensive pedagogical experience are of retirement and pre-retirement age - from a quarter to a third of the total staff. It is difficult for them to switch to new technologies. We need to develop a non-traditional format. In online classes you do not have to follow the scheme: one group - one teacher. For example, two or more groups can conduct joint classes - one part of the class is taught by a young professional, while the other part is taught by a more experienced mentor.

In the spring of 2021, many universities of Kyrgyzstan switched to hybrid classes in accordance with the order of the Ministry of Science and Education. Hybrid teaching means a class with those present offline, and the rest online. In our faculty, 1-2 foreign students were present in groups and at the same time the teachers worked with the others online via ZOOM. It was more logical to form groups of 6-8 people from the arrived students for offline classes and with the rest of the students to work online with the freed teachers. But the dean's office and accounting were not ready for changes. They were referring to old standards and instructions that need to be reworked.

**Conclusion**

On the basis of the interview, as well as based on our experience in distance learning, we came to the conclusion, that in a pandemic, there are no alternative ways to continue learning and in general, students are satisfied with the distance learning process. In order to increase the level of motivation to learn it is necessary
to continue to improve and refine methods. First of all, it is recommended to increase the staff of technical support to reduce the risks of online resource malfunctions. It is need continue to create video lessons on practical skills in each discipline where it is required. And finally, considering the fact that distance learning is a new method and both teachers and students face difficulties, it is necessary to conduct training sessions to improve the pedagogical skills of distance learning in order to improve the quality of medical education. In a pandemic, moving to a remote format may be considered a reasonable alternative to traditional training, taking into account the low risk of infection.

References: