

# ATTITUDE OF MEDICAL STUDENTS TOWARDS OLDER PERSONS



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## Background

The progressive aging of society, caused by profound demographic changes, goes with necessity of confronting the subject of biases against the elderly. Competencies include not only knowledge and skills but also attitudes and the ability of activating and utilizing them in certain situations. Medical students often get a skewed perspective on older persons, being exposed mainly to sickest ones. Education in medical school can be a part of solution to combat prejudice and improve care for older adults. The goal was to find out the attitude of medical school students in their clinical years towards older persons.

## Material & Methods

Scale Test About Meaning of Your Attitude Towards Older Person by Department of Public Health Gerontology, Andrija Štampar Teaching Institute of Public Health, Zagreb, Croatia was used. Test contained 16 questions consisting of opposing descriptions of older persons. Data were processed in a way that each description had 7 possible answers (7 levels ranging from -3 to +3). By summation of such values results were acquired for each question. 3-day online questionnaire for students in clinical years was made where they were able to voluntarily participate.

## Results

112 medical students who responded to online test were questioned in order to assess their opinions on older persons. On 10 options in the questionnaire the greatest number of participants described older persons with a score 0, indicating that they are equally distant from both extremes and the least number of participants marked older persons with -3, showing that the least number of participants had negative opinion of older persons in these categories. Other categories showed that regarding some traits, older persons were considered positive, with greatest number of respondents considering them useful and experienced and minority of participants regarding them opposite. On the other hand, there were some categories where greatest number of participants had such attitude, that they marked elderly as slower and more dependent on help. In the presentation, results are described in more detail.

3. pitanje

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid -2	2	1.8	1.8	1.8
-1	13	11.5	11.5	13.3
0	44	38.9	38.9	52.2
1	31	27.4	27.4	79.6
2	14	12.4	12.4	92.0
3	9	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Likert scale type test

Old person is:

1  
ILL  0  1  2  3  4  5  6 HEALTHY

2  
POOR  0  1  2  3  4  5  6 RICH

3  
UNTIDY  0  1  2  3  4  5  6 TIDY

4  
FAT  0  1  2  3  4  5  6 SKINNY

## Conclusion

Most of the participants showed either positive or neutral stance towards the older persons. Many medical students still deem older persons as slower and more help dependent but at the same time think they are useful and experienced. More practical experience with a variety of older persons could help further improving the competences of medical students.