

Background: Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been defined as “a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s own thinking and actions” (Salovey et al., 1990). It can be speculated that EI is related directly to the competency of interpersonal and communication skills, and is important in the assessment and training of medical undergraduates.

Aim: This review aimed to determine the impact of structured educational interventions on the emotional intelligence of medical students

Methods: We systematically searched 14 electronic databases and hand searched high yield journals. We looked at changes in emotional intelligence and related behaviour of medical students, assessed using Kirkpatrick’s hierarchy, provided they could be related directly to the content of the educational intervention.

Results: A total of 1947 articles were reviewed, of which 15 articles met the inclusion criteria.

Conclusions: Findings suggest implications for practice: Overall, educational interventions to improve EI in medical students have a small, positive effect on attitudes and knowledge.

Outcomes measuring change in attitudes and knowledge (assessed using Kirkpatrick’s hierarchy- levels 2a and 2b) are not applicable to real-life practice, and such self-report measures may overestimate the impact of the intervention. Assessments of behaviour (assessed using Kirkpatrick’s hierarchy- level 3) post-intervention show little to no improvement, and decreases in EI have been reported. As assessment becomes more structured and applicable to real life, changes in EI become less. Care must be taken in interpreting the results of educational interventions to assess EI.