

## **English Language Proficiency has a Significant Impact on Medical School Examination Performance**

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Medical education in Sri Lanka is done exclusively in English Language. An overwhelming majority of students who enter the medical school have had their secondary school education in Sinhala medium, which is their mother tongue. This change of medium of instruction on entry to medical school and the level of English language proficiency of students, achieved during school education might affect the academic performance of medical students. The purpose of this study is to assess how the English language proficiency of students and the medium of instruction in school affect medical school examination performance. The study was conducted from June to July 2018. All students who had completed at least the second year medical examination of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya, whose mother tongue is Sinhala were included in the study. Medium of instruction at GCE (O/L), Grades obtained for English language at GCE (O/L) (as an indicator of English language proficiency) and the medical school examination results of second year and fourth year (Grade Point Average values-GPA) were collected. Students' T test was used for statistical analysis and significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ . Total of 416 students were included in the study. Eighty eight percent of students had achieved an "A" grade for English language at the GCE (O/L) Examination while 91.8% had done their school education in Sinhala medium. There was a statistically significant difference between mean GPA values for second year exam between students who had achieved A grades for English language in GCE (O/L) and who had not (3.02 vs 2.57  $p=0.001$ ). The same was true for fourth year exam results (3.21 vs 2.77  $p=0.003$ ). With reference to medium of instructions in school, there was no significant difference in medical college examination results between the Sinhala medium and English medium students ( $p=0.3$ ). In conclusion, our study shows that the English language proficiency has significant impact on medical school examination results but not the medium of instructions in school.

**Key words:** Exam performance, Medical education, English proficiency, medium of instruction