

Dyslexia does not reduce pass rates for UK GP licensing exam

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UK GPs with dyslexia are just as likely to pass the knowledge component of the licensing exam as their counterparts, a new study has found.

The Applied Knowledge Test (AKT) is part of the qualification needed to become a Member of the Royal College of General Practitioners (MRCGP) and become licensed to practice independently.

Researchers examined pass rates of doctors-in-training who had taken the AKT and found that, once other factors linked to [exam](#) success were taken into account, those who declare [dyslexia](#) prior to taking their exams do not have lower pass rates.

Candidates who declared dyslexia after initially failing the exam were more likely to be minority ethnic candidates with a primary medical qualification outside of the UK.

The research, led by researchers from the University of Lincoln, UK, in collaboration with the MRCGP examination, compared data from 14,801 candidates who were tested between 2010 and 2015, of whom 379 declared dyslexia. Factors linked to exam success such as age, sex, ethnicity, country of primary medical qualification, stage of training, number of attempts, and the time spent completing tests were taken into account.

Significantly, findings highlight that those who did not declare their

dyslexia initially and therefore were not given extra exam support, such as additional time, had higher failure rates. Data showed that overseas candidates were less likely to have initially declared their dyslexia.

Dyslexia affects around 6% of the UK population and around 2% of medical students. Features of dyslexia in adults can include problems with recall, reading, time management and task prioritisation which can make high stakes, multiple choice examinations like the mandatory AKT challenging.

The research has raised questions about dyslexia diagnosis during medical training, especially in those who use English as an additional language, who may not have been tested at an earlier stage in their education. Currently, screening for dyslexia is not routinely provided by those responsible for training GPs.

Lead researcher, Dr Zahid Asghar, Senior Lecturer in statistics at the University of Lincoln said: "Our research has found that, once the candidates' age, gender, stage of training and other demographic traits are taken into account, dyslexia is not associated with lower pass rates in the AKT. However, the fact that doctors from overseas were more likely to declare dyslexia after initially failing the test is a significant finding."

Niroshan Siriwardena, Professor of Primary & Pre-Hospital Health Care at the University of Lincoln, co-author of the study and research and development lead for assessment for the MRCGP said: "Our findings were reassuring for candidates declaring dyslexia in that they performed as well as other candidates taking the exam once other factors had been taken into account.

"The findings have highlighted that we need to look in more detail at screening and educational support for doctors with dyslexia, in particular those from minority ethnic groups, to remove potential barriers and

create an inclusive [training](#) environment. We advocate more consistent and earlier screening to identify dyslexia as soon as possible during [medical training](#). This is an approach that has proven successful in other clinical settings."

More information: Zahid B Asghar et al, Performance of candidates disclosing dyslexia with other candidates in a UK medical licensing examination: cross-sectional study, *Postgraduate Medical Journal* (2018). [DOI: 10.1136/postgradmedj-2017-135326](https://doi.org/10.1136/postgradmedj-2017-135326)

Provided by University of Lincoln

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