



E-mail :info@kistmcth.edu.np | www.kistmcth.edu.np

Journal of KIST Medical College

Never Disclose a Student's Grade to Another

Pathiyil Ravi Shankar

IMU Centre for Education

International Medical University

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

I had recently joined as a faculty at a Caribbean medical school in the island nation of Aruba. I finished proctoring an online exam; the examination software generated the scores and now I had to share the grades with the students. The Dean of Basic Sciences was explaining the university rules regarding sharing of student grades. The grades must be shared only with the student and not with anyone else. He introduced me to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the law governing educational records in the United States (US). FERPA clearly states that written permission from a parent or an eligible student is required before information from an educational record can be disclosed to others except under certain circumstances. The law also mentions that once a student attains 18 years of age all the rights previously given to the parent or guardian automatically transfer to the student. The student's permission may be required for a parent to access educational records with some exceptions.

Many offshore Caribbean medical schools recruit faculty members from South Asia and West Africa. The laws and regulations regarding privacy and access to educational records are very different in these countries. Usually, marks and grades are displayed on notice boards (physical or virtual) and

students do not have any problem with knowing each other's grades. Faculty members from these areas may not be knowledgeable about FERPA and the institutions usually do not have formal courses on the subject. I learned in detail about FERPA through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program which offers online courses on a variety of topics related to research, ethics, and compliance training. Detailed guidance about FERPA and educational rights of students are required for faculty to better understand the US situation. Offshore schools have basic science campuses in the Caribbean, but their clinical training sites are usually located in the US.

Having worked in medical schools at different locations the differences in attitudes toward privacy in different locations and countries has drawn my attention. People in Asian countries are generally not averse to sharing personal information. In India, many personal details of medical school faculty members are shared on the National Medical Commission website. I have been discussing this with my colleagues and acquaintances and the question most ask regarding sharing is 'Will I face any negative consequences if I share this information?' while in the west the question

Correspondence

Dr P Ravi Shankar

International Medical University

Bukit Jalil Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

Poskod: 57000

Email: ravi.dr.shankar@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0001-6105-5636

Copyright

JKISTMC applies the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International License (CC BY) to all works we publish. Under the CC BY license, authors retain ownership of the copyright for their article, but authors allow anyone to download, reuse, reprint, distribute, and/or copy articles in JKISTMC, so long as the original authors and source are cited.



asked will be 'Why should I share this information?' The recent COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted these differences. Many Asian societies were more accepting of surveillance, registration using an app, and other measures to reduce disease transmission than western democracies. Many national identifications systems in Asia require the submission of biometric data by respondents and this has not resulted in widespread protests.

Also, parents in Asian cultures generally are treated with respect, are in a position of authority and denying a parent's request for information about their son or daughter because the student has not authorized the sharing, may be difficult to understand for Asian faculty. Faculty and medical students should be aware that there may be cultural differences about privacy. Some cultures may place greater emphasis on the common good and maybe willing to sacrifice individual privacy to a greater extent. With increasing international migration this is something to be aware of. Having arrived in Aruba from Nepal where students' marks are usually displayed on institution notice boards, I was grateful for the advice by the Dean for understanding the different emphasis placed on privacy and sharing of educational records.