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ABSTRACT FORM FOR FREE PAPERS COMMUNICATION  
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**Dental Students' Attitudes towards Communication Skills Learning: An Assessment between Two Dental Schools in Malaysia.**

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**Purpose of Study:** The objectives of this study were to assess dental students' attitudes towards communication skills learning, to compare the attitudes of students between two public dental schools in Malaysia and to find the associations between their attitudes and selected demographic variables and education-related characteristics.

**Materials and Method:** A cross-sectional survey using modified Communication Skills Attitude Scale (CSAS), which contained both positive and negative subscales, was carried out involving all final year dental students in (University of Malaya) UM and (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) UKM. Data were collected during lectures and clinical sessions. Results were analysed using parametric and non-parametric statistics in SPSS statistical package version 12.0.

**Results:** There were 148 students with response rate 88.1%. Sixty-eight (45.9%) were from UM and 80 (54.1%) were from UKM. UKM students were found to have significantly more positive attitudes towards communication skills learning (PAS score: mean=48.96, S.D=4.48,  $p<0.001$ ) compared to UM students (mean=46.03, S.D=4.22). There was no significant difference between the groups in terms of negative attitudes towards communication skills learning (NAS score for UM: median=30, interquartile range 25-35; UKM: mean=30, S.D=2.34). UM students with more positive attitudes perceived themselves as good communicators ( $p=0.084$ ) and for UKM they tended to be female ( $p=0.01$ ). UM students with more negative attitudes perceived themselves as poor communicators ( $p=0.002$ ) and for UKM they tended to have poor English proficiency ( $p=0.012$ ).

**Conclusions:** This study suggests that both UM and UKM final year dental students had positive and negative attitudes towards communication skills learning. These attitudes were associated with certain demographic and educational-related characteristics.

**ORAL PRESENTATION: SO-2**

