

INCORPORATING FAMILY MEDICINE MODULE IN THE UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM

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*“Family medicine is defined as that specialty of medicine which is concerned with providing comprehensive care to individuals and families and integrating biomedical, behavioural and social sciences. As an academic discipline, it includes comprehensive health care services, education, and research (WHO)”*¹. Family Medicine (FM) was incorporated in medical curricula from the early 60s in the west. About 2 decades ago, many South Asian countries have adopted it as a specialty. Recently, many other third-world countries are in the process of developing curricula in both undergraduate and postgraduate programs².

In Pakistan, Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto medical university, University of Health Sciences Lahore, Nishtar Medical College Multan, Ayub Medical College Abbottabad, Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences Islamabad, Liaqat National medical college Karachi and Fatima Memorial Hospital Lahore are running MCPS programs since the late 90s. Agha Khan medical university, Baqai medical university, and Shifa hospital Islamabad are running undergraduate programs in FM. Khyber Medical University (KMU) is offering a diploma in FM since 2018³.

In the recent PMDC (now PMC) inspection document, 100 hours have been allocated for teaching FM to undergraduate MBBS students as a compulsory subject. This step has created unrest in medical schools throughout the country as limited faculty is available for FM teaching. However, this will prompt the administrations of the medical schools to start this program⁴.

To develop and implement an undergraduate curriculum for FM in Khyber Medical college, there is a dire need for nominating proper personnel including FM specialists, medical educators, and representatives of the administration of the institute to form a committee. The roles and responsibilities of this committee will include, developing a module containing, the learning outcomes, contents, teaching methods, time allocation, and assessment techniques. The ongoing curriculum reforms undergoing in KMU will help the colleges to develop and implement this module. However, till the establishment of proper

departments of FM in affiliated hospitals, the contents of the module need to be taught by disciplines like Public Health, General Medicine, Gynaecology, and Psychiatry.

Establishing a full-fledged department of FM and incorporating the curriculum in undergraduate medical education and training will strengthen the healthcare delivery to communities in villages and small towns where health facilities are meagre. It will enhance the skills of medical graduates who are freshly appointed in these areas for service delivery. This will ultimately reduce the workload on the major hospitals in the province and will improve the referral system which is the backbone of the healthcare system of a country.

The government, regulating bodies (PMC), assessing bodies (KMU), and individual medical institutions should speed up the development and implementation of the FM curriculum at the MBBS level to improve and streamline the healthcare delivery at the community level.

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