

EDITORIAL

CAREER ORIENTATION IN MEDICAL PROFESSION

The 21st century is witnessing remarkable revolutions and changes in the primitive trends globally in every field. The medical profession is no exception but in our part of the world, some conventions still prevail and are rigid enough to modify. It is being observed that the majority of medical graduates opt for post-graduate training in the major fields of medicine, surgery, paediatrics and gynaecology / obstetrics, whereas training slots in other specialties, both clinical and basic sciences, are either under-filled or left fully un-occupied. There is a dire need to explore the reasons for this biased attitude of medical graduates towards different specialties.

Over flow of trainees in a few specialties is not a fruitful trend even for those particular specialties. Excess of trainees causes over-saturation of the respective departments with trainees who cannot receive due attention from supervisors owing to their large numbers. Since medical resources are limited, trainees cannot get hands-on experience in all the major and minor procedures that are expected from them at the completion of any particular year of training. Specialties that are under-filled on the other hand cannot accomplish vertical mobility due to lack of enough human resources and so with the passage of time they persist as conformist fields unable to exercise latest trends.

It is these trainees who will be occupying the clinical and supervisory posts in a decade's time in these same hospitals. If there are limited numbers of trainees in minor specialties and basic sciences, it can be foreseen that over the next decade or so, these fields will not harvest trained mentors and teachers.

In any training institute, all the disciplines are inter-linked because most of the patients presenting to these institutes have already been seen at the primary level and are complex cases that cannot be evaluated by any single area of expertise and usually require integrated management approaches. This is the concept that forms the basis for multi-disciplinary approach being practiced world-wide. Now, in our set-up, if some specialties are more established than others, how will this multi-disciplinary approach come into action when we do not have enough qualified staff in other fields? As a result, the efficiency of all specialties suffers a setback.

We need to look into the reasons for this approach of majority of the medical graduates. Most of the graduates themselves are unaware of their specialty selection criteria. They happen to follow the trends being set by senior colleagues; this then takes the form of a vicious cycle which repeats every year. The societal norms, personality idealization and mental approach also have their role to play.

There is ominous need for career counseling among the medical graduates who graduate from medical colleges in herds every year but after graduation they are totally unaware of their future perspectives. They are clueless about specialty selection and fall prey to hearsay. If they are made aware of recent trends in all the specialties and how the world is revolutionizing in different fields, they will be motivated to opt for other fields also rather than sticking to conventions.

The sub-specialties, both basic and clinical sciences, are much dynamic and advanced in contradiction to common perception of medical graduates and a bright future awaits those who opt for these specialties as post-graduate trainees. Provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has taken an exemplary step by providing lucrative monthly package to post-graduate trainees of less attractive specialties like nephrology, anaesthesia and radiology. Similar step should also be taken by government and medical institutes to arrange attractive job packages for faculty members of these specialties. This concept has worked remarkably in the west; specialties that are under-filled or deserted are made more attractive by offering higher salaries and providing an academic environment that promotes learning.

Teaching methods also need to be revised and assistance can be taken from Khyber Medical University and Department of Medical Education to encourage critical thinking in students by adopting recent teaching strategies.

All these factors if approached together will lead to uniform improvement in medical care in all fields and will lead to uplift in the overall practice of medicine.

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