

Letter to the Editor

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The Road not taken : A Perspective of a Medical Professional's Inability to Choose between Clinical Practice or Postgraduation Degree after Internship

SIR — A PG (Postgraduation) degree has almost become a requisite to pursue medical profession in India. A major part of such degrees rely on the clinical mastery of the doctors but to our dismay, the clinical exposure we get during our MBBS courses and internship does not adequately prepare us for such bigger roles. Patients' outlook has gradually changed over time and it has been often seen that a doctor with a MD or DM degree is preferred over a "suboptimal" MBBS degree, as stated by a few patients. This has subjected the young doctors into a fierce academic competition to crack entrance examinations like NEET (National Eligibility Entrance Test), INICET (Institute of national importance combined entrance test) etc. The race is getting tougher day by day in a constant crescendo so much so that it has almost become a norm to dedicate a year or two only for "PG preparation". A vast majority of the aspirants are getting enrolled in various online courses completely sacrificing the clinical exposure of working in a hospital. The internship courses showcase a mere orientation programme with scanty clinical exposure. In most of the hospitals interneers are made to fill up charts, perform phlebotomy, insert catheter, write requisitions etc and are seldom a part of the clinical decision making process. After completing the internship, if we are again detaching ourselves from clinical exposure and devoting years to post graduation entrance, is it compromising our clinical acumen further? Having said that, now if we take into account a budding doctor's point of view, the need for post-graduation in India has outweighed the requirement

of clinical practice in a doctor's career. The question pattern keeps changing every now and then, leaving them with meagre time to balance between their yearning for clinical experience and simultaneously preparing for the mutating MCQ (Multiple Choice Question) pattern. For example, just a few years ago image based questions were rarely asked but with the commencement of computer based tests, questions with CT (Computed Tomography) scan, X-ray, clinical images are commonly asked and without a rigorous practice it is not possible to get success in these entrance tests. After getting into a PG course it is very difficult to have the necessary experience of the other specialities, which is a sine-qua-non to become a successful physician of any speciality. Joining a clinical branch for postgraduation with sparse clinical experience and suddenly being given the huge responsibility of treating patients ultimately results in compromised patient-care at times. Moreover, there is heterogeneity in the work culture or duties of interneers in different states. So, the degree of clinical exposure keeps varying from one Post graduate trainee to another. The regulatory authority should take this issue into account to ensure optimum patient care. A mandatory and uniform clinical orientation course for the post graduate trainees all over India can probably bridge the gap of clinical experience and align them better into the clinical practice.

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