

## Letter to the Editor

*[The Editor is not responsible for the views expressed by the correspondents]*

### Mentor - Mentee Programme for Indian Medical Students : Opportunities and Challenges

SIR, — Medicine is by far one of the most respected and noble profession. But in this ever-changing society adaptability is extremely important. Keeping these points under consideration the National Medical Commission of India (NMC), the apex body regulating Medical Education in India is bringing in a revolutionary change in the medical curriculum to have a hand holding between the medical students and the senior doctors through the proposed Mentor-Mentee programme.

A closer look at a few facts about the stress faced by Indian medical students during training makes us understand the requirement of such a programme. An online survey conducted by the students of the Koppal Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS), comprising 1,001 MBBS students from 70 medical colleges across India, revealed that 43% of them felt the urge to drop out from the course<sup>1</sup>. In the last 5 years, unfortunately there have been 122 cases of suicides by medical students and 1,270 dropouts according to the NMC<sup>2</sup>.

The Anti-Ragging Committee of the NMC set up a National Task Force which launched an online survey regarding the mental health of medical students. They received more than 37,000 applications from medical students and faculty stating that they are suffering from mental health and psychological ailments<sup>3</sup>.

These figures highlight the immense work pressure and stress the medical students deal in India. Prioritizing mental health is the only way to improve the current scenario. Therefore, the Mentor-Mentee program is the need of the hour. It aims at building an informal relationship between the student and the Medical teacher, where the student can openly discuss not only their academic issues but also their emotional, social, and psychological issues. There is also growing evidence of the mentoring program in professional and personal development of students<sup>(4)</sup>. Whenever the students are under any kind of stress, it is expected that they would always be able to discuss it freely with their mentors who can guide them through the crisis period.

In our opinion, a few changes can be made for this program to make it more student-friendly and effective.

Under the new Competency Based Medical Education (CBME), a structured mandatory Mentorship Training

program for the faculty is required to sensitize them about the guidelines and procedures. Currently many mentors are not aware of their roles and responsibilities during this program. The mentees must also be made aware of their role and the expected outcome<sup>4</sup>. Success Indicators such as suicide avoidance rate and drop out avoidance rate can be calculated at a regular interval by the Medical College to understand the utility of this program. Initiation of "Best Mentor Award" by a Medical College can motivate mentors to contribute effectively.

The students should be allowed to share their experience and feedback about this program in a structured format. Their feedback is essential to improve the quality of mentoring in the long run.

Such steps would greatly contribute to successful implementation of the Mentor-Mentee program and contribute to Indian medical students in days to come.

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