

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Mess of Medical Education*Prakash Agarwal, People's University, India*

The recent published articles in the January 2012 issue of IJUDH bring out interesting facts about medical education and its special relevance to India and other developing nations. It is so amazing that doctors are expected to study so much, be noble, humble, ethical, educated, qualified, honest and what not. Does our medical education system and practice ensure all this or are these fancy words just to spend some lectures on medical education in India in air-conditioned conference halls.

Some facts and remedies are discussed here. A lot has been written that there is little clinical teaching in wards and OPDs. Teachers are busy in treating patients and do not give time to students. I can say that if all of us work honestly with punctuality, there are sufficient 'free' days apart from OPDs/OT days which can be utilized to teach students. Also part time teachers can be pooled in if severe shortage is felt. Medical Council of India does not prohibit the medical college from devising ways to teach students. It gives guidelines to have minimum requirements, however requisite changes can be made if required.

Apart from the medical knowledge pressure, students have pressure of ragging, emotional distress, peer pressure of alcohol and having money to spend a great lifestyle.

We cannot forget that they exposed to all the vices of life just like any teenager and are bound to get swayed. If early intervention is not provided, we may lose a national asset. Such students are aware of many anti-psychiatry drugs and sedatives and do abuse them at their fullest. I can share a sad personal experience of a suicide committed by a close friend just because he failed in a PSM pre-university exam. None of his friends or parents could ever understand how much mental pressure he was under. He had to perform well because he had three generations of leading clinicians in his family and he had to stand by their name. I think the role of student counseling should be compulsory and regularly done.

A large divide is noted between government and private medical colleges like the quality of students, infrastructure, patients, teachers etc. I am sure that each one would agree that government medical colleges are deteriorating fast due to apathetic the attitude of government, political interference in administration, corruption in purchase of equipment & medicines. The criteria for selection of faculty are biased either due to caste, favoritism, political interference and bribery. The 'ego' of senior staff members and red tapism add to the problems, even if one wishes to do good work.