Rise and fall of NEET

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Megha Sharma,
Junior resident, Medicine - India

Submitting Author:
Dr. Megha Sharma,
Junior resident, Medicine - India

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Author(s): Sharma M

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Medical education is India is one of the largest in the world with more than 300 medical colleges (including both government sector and private sector medical colleges) with annual intake of more than 32,000 medical students who add to the existing medical manpower 1, however, it is marred by multiple issues including but not limited to, lack of ongoing reforms 1, no impetus on quality clinical research 2,3 and frequent strikes by in-training residents 4,5, all of which by themselves contribute to compromise in effective health care delivery 6,7. Rise and fall of NEET is another such story.

Medical colleges in India are primarily either managed by government sector or private sector. However, private sector has always been under fire for allowing admission by charging heavy fee under name of capitation fee. Moreover, students had to write separate exams for government and private sector medical colleges, as a result students had to apply for different exams and travel all across country to appear for those exams which imposed several limitations of people especially from poor financial background. Medical Council of India in 2010 decided to start NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test), a nationwide central exam for all medical colleges of India in an attempt to bring uniformity across different exams. It was implemented in 2012 with first exam conducted last year. However, it did not last long and after a long legal battle between MCI and representative of private medical college in the highest court of India, the exam was finally scrapped in July 2013.

While MCI has always been condemned for not bringing reforms to medical education in India, its attempt to standardize entrance exam all across nation was thrashed by the apex court. Still a lot needs to be done in order to raise standard of medical education including more impetus on clinical and practical training, standardizing training of residents by collaborating MD-DNB programs 8,9. However, these changes would need stringent joint efforts by bureaucrats at different levels before medical education standards can be improved in India.

Reference(s)

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