Reduction In The Required Number Of Faculty Of Forensic Medicine In Medical Colleges Of India

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Author(s): D'Souza D

My opinion

1. Introduction: Medical Council of India (MCI) has the responsibility of maintaining the standards of medical education in the country. Several amendments have been suggested and implemented, based on the need, for the existing regulations regarding the medical education. This article refers to the amendments by the MCI, dated 17th September 2010, which have allowed the reduction of the minimum number of faculty, in the department of forensic medicine in the medical colleges which are teaching MBBS. The reduction of required faculty of forensic medicine has been reduced across all the categories (based on intake of students) of medical colleges. Majority of the medical colleges are admitting either 100 students or 150 students per year. The reduction of the forensic medicine faculty in medical colleges by these amendments have therefore going to staff the department with only 2 (100 MBBS admissions/year) or 3 forensic medicine experts (150 MBBS admissions/year), when compared to higher numbers in the earlier years.

2. Importance of Forensic medicine:
Forensic medicine is an important branch of medicine, which provides scientific evidence in the administration of justice. Judiciary relies on medical evidence more than ever before, especially if that evidence is provided by the expert in forensic medicine.

3. Duties of a faculty of forensic medicine:
The duties of forensic medicine faculty of a medical college, in addition to teaching by lectures and other methods, includes conducting medico-legal autopsies, attending judicial court duties, medico-legal cases in hospital and others (research, expert opinions, training to judiciary and police, additional institutional work such as administration, etc.).

4. Adverse effects due to the reduction in the number of faculty:
4.1. Inconvenience due to work overload: Imagine a scenario in a medical college (100 admissions) with only 2 forensic medicine staff (as per the amendment of 17th September 210): only one of these staff member will be working on several of the days, because the other one might be on a court's duty (forensic medicine doctors are called to courts very often), vacation, or has availed other types of leave, the department will be left with only one faculty member to carry out the duties; there is every chance of causing justifiable inconvenience to the public, by delaying the autopsies.

4.2.1. Decline in the Quality of Medical Education: Apart from causing inconvenience to the public who are eagerly awaiting the speedy disposal of dead body, there are other fallouts of these amendments such as the issue of excessive work load and constraints in dealing with other duties, and resulting in decline in the quality of medical education.

4.2.2. Indian scenario: A medical practitioner (MBBS) of India is expected to perform autopsies, issue medico-legal reports, and know about poisons, ethics and so on, all of which is tightly scheduled in the MBBS curriculum, and is being taught in the department of forensic medicine. Considering medico-legal autopsies, in India, with less than 20% of the total autopsy reports being written by forensic medical experts, the majority of the work is carried out by other doctors, mainly by MBBS Doctors in the government hospitals. This mandates that our training of MBBS doctor should be intensive and cover all the medico legal issues and make them competent enough to use it in future. With the amendment which could bring down the number of autopsies conducted in the medical college hospital, the sufferer would be the society at large, and autopsy services in particular; the MBBS students will be unable to get proper training due to lack of practical exposure. So many of the future MBBS doctors might be relatively incompetent and therefore, unable to serve the society by assisting the judicial system in criminal investigations; the result may be disastrous- the miscarriage of justice. This issue is relevant, when we consider the views by eminent members such as Justice Venkatachalaiah, that there is a need to give better training in Forensic Medicine to medical graduates.

4.3. No takers of Post graduate course in Forensic Medicine: This amendment reduces the job prospects of any aspiring candidate to pursue forensic medicine as career. Unlike many other subjects, Forensic medicine graduate has to be attached to a medical college. When the teaching staff posts are reduced there will be very few takers of this postgraduate course. Although there are reportage about the
shortage of faculty of forensic medicine (many would not like to pursue this career with a ‘stigma’), several graduates are getting trained in forensic medicine to join this service oriented profession; such youngsters should be encouraged by better job opportunities and facilities, so that the justice system in our country gets better than ever before.

5. Suggestions: The minimum number of faculty, required in the department of forensic medicine, should be reconsidered by the MCI. The training of forensic medicine in the MBBS curriculum should be made more efficient and useful. Every step should be taken towards ensuring the quality of medico-legal work; this could be achieved by increasing the number of available forensic medicine experts.

Conclusion

MCI’s ill conceived perception about Forensic Medicine requires to be set right by simply convincing them that the subject is a felt need, not something avoidable being thrust upon the MBBS students.

Abbreviation(s)

MCI=Medical Council of India
Reviews

Review 1

Review Title: Faculty reduction in Forensic Medicine in India

Posted by Lead Faculty Dr. Prateek Rastogi on 31 Dec 2011 09:18:41 AM GMT

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<td>Is the subject of the article within the scope of the subject category?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Are the interpretations / conclusions sound and justified by the data?</td>
<td>Partly</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Are structure and length satisfactory?</td>
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<td>Is the quality of the diction satisfactory?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Are the illustrations and tables necessary and acceptable?</td>
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<td>Are the keywords and abstract or summary informative?</td>
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Rating: 6

Comment:
This article brings out a burning and much debated issue among medical fraternity in India.
My suggestion is that for more impact author should mention previous strength of faculty in the subject for 50,100,150,200,250 admissions and then compare it with reduced strength.

Competing interests: No

Invited by the author to make a review on this article?: No

Experience and credentials in the specific area of science:
6 years experience in forensic medicine and toxicology

Publications in the same or a related area of science: No

How to cite: Rastogi P. Faculty reduction in Forensic Medicine in India [Review of the article 'Reduction In The Required Number Of Faculty Of Forensic Medicine In Medical Colleges Of India ' by ].WebmedCentral 1970;2(12):WMCRW001320
Review 2

Review Title: Reduction in the required number of faculty of Forensic Medicine i Medical Colleges of India

Posted by Faculty Dr. Saurabh Chattopadhyay on 16 Dec 2011 03:48:20 PM GMT

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Rating: 6

Comment:
6. This paper highlights the status of Forensic Medicine in India and its future. The international audience would have little interest in it. However it is of definite value for the Forensic Faculty in India.

Competing interests: None

Invited by the author to make a review on this article? : No

Experience and credentials in the specific area of science:
Teaching exxperience in Forensic Medicine of 7 years.

Publications in the same or a related area of science: No

How to cite: Chattopadhyay S.Reduction in the required number of faculty of Forensic Medicine i Medical Colleges of India[Review of the article 'Reduction In The Required Number Of Faculty Of Forensic Medicine In Medical Colleges Of India ' by ].WebmedCentral 1970;2(12):WMCRW001273
Review 3

Review Title: Reduction In The Required Number Of Faculty Of Forensic Medicine In Medical Colleges Of India

Posted by Mr. Suchir Arora on 09 Dec 2010 04:18:04 AM GMT

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Rating: 6

Comment:
Review Category 1. Great initiative to highlight a relevant cause embarking negligence in medical education in India.

Review Category 6. Suggestion:: Title can be changed. It will have more impact through a question asked.
>> "Why is Indian Judiciary Ignoring the Importance of FORENSICS in Medical Education??"

Competing interests: None

Invited by the author to make a review on this article? : Yes

Experience and credentials in the specific area of science:
I am having 5 years of Academic and Industrial Experience in Research/Discovery Informatics, focussed on Life Sciences, Clinical Research, Biotech, Healthcare and Para-medical sector.

Publications in the same or a related area of science: No

How to cite: Arora S.Reduction In The Required Number Of Faculty Of Forensic Medicine In Medical Colleges Of India[Review of the article 'Reduction In The Required Number Of Faculty Of Forensic Medicine In Medical Colleges Of India ' by ],WebmedCentral 1970;1(12):WMCRW00215
Review 4

Review Title: Reduction in the required number of faculty of Forensic medicine in medical colleges of India

Posted by Dr. Shashidhar C Mestri on 09 Dec 2010 02:35:19 AM GMT

1. Is the subject of the article within the scope of the subject category? Yes
2. Are the interpretations / conclusions sound and justified by the data? Yes
3. Is this a new and original contribution? Yes
4. Does this paper exemplify an awareness of other research on the topic? No
5. Are structure and length satisfactory? Yes
6. Can you suggest brief additions or amendments or an introductory statement that will increase the value of this paper for an international audience? Yes
7. Can you suggest any reductions in the paper, or deletions of parts? No
8. Is the quality of the diction satisfactory? No
9. Are the illustrations and tables necessary and acceptable? No
10. Are the references adequate and are they all necessary? No
11. Are the keywords and abstract or summary informative? Yes

Rating: 6

Comment:

Importance of Forensic medicine

2. It also helps the students to equip with Laws in relation to medical practice and basics of ethics, negligence aspects & consent formalities. These are must for ethical & legal practice with confidence of facing litigations & frivolous charges.

4. Adverse effects due to reduction in the members of faculty

4.1 If UG strength is of 70 or so, we have to divide them into two batches for effective practical teaching. If faculty is only two, it becomes impossible to handle. Often on practical day, we may have theory class preceding practical.

4.3 The faculty reduction in the future shall worsen because no body will come forward to take up this subject. This shall result in further worsening of standard and deterioration of medico-legal services. There shall be no minimum four examiners to conduct university examinations in future.

5. The subject training must be made mandatory to interns and refresher course to Government doctors, medical officers of private hospitals. India being a vast country, one can not ignore training of UG with Forensic medicine who shall join Government & private sector hospitals and deal with medico-legal cases.

Competing interests: no

Invited by the author to make a review on this article?: No

Experience and credentials in the specific area of science:
Medical teacher in Forensic medicine from last 25 years.

Publications in the same or a related area of science: No

How to cite: Mestri S. Reduction in the required number of faculty of Forensic medicine in medical colleges of India [Review of the article 'Reduction In The Required Number Of Faculty Of Forensic Medicine In Medical Colleges Of India' by ]. WebmedCentral 1970;1(12):WMCRW00214
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