Current Curricular Reforms in Undergraduate Medical Education in India

*…. Who will blow the whistle?*

**What is happening presently in medical colleges coming under the ambit of MCI?1**

Medical Council of India (MCI) has planned to roll out the new Competency Based Undergraduate Curriculum with effect from this academic year starting from Aug 2019, a much needed major educational reform , after independence and after a long gap of nearly 22 years. The MCI initiative must be applauded with no second thought, as it is aimed to meet the present day need of producing an Indian Medical Graduate, satisfying the Global standards. Further, it can be claimed to be the biggest educational reform, no other country on the globe has ever ventured into. Today, over 491 medical colleges spread across the country, are functioning under the MCI. MCI, though is tainted with corruption and has been suspended presently, the present Board of Governors, superseding the MCI, are going ahead with the plan of implementation of ‘Competency Based Curriculum’ envisioned by the MCI, almost a decade back. Adequate, preparatory ground work across the country, is already in place; each and every medical college in the country, has a functioning ‘Medical Education Unit’ as per the mandate of MCI. There are 20 Nodal /Regional centers spread across the country with well trained human resource offering ‘Faculty Development Programs’ for the teachers working in various medical colleges in India. Till now, more than 37000 medical teachers, across the country, have been trained in modern educational methodology and teaching technology. Curriculum Implementation Support Programs(CISPs) have already commenced in all the nodal/regional centers, so that the new Competency Based Undergraduate Medical Curriculum comes into force, wef. August 2019.

**What is happening in AIIMS institutions?2**

All-India Institute of Medical Sciences**, New Delhi,** was established in 1956 as an institution of national importance by an Act of Parliament with the objective of developing patterns of teaching in[Undergraduate](file:///E:\ragu\aiims\academic\courses.htm#UG)and [Post-graduate](file:///E:\ragu\aiims\academic\courses.htm#PG) Medical Education in all its branches, so as to demonstrate a high standard of Medical Education in India; to bring together in one place educational facilities of the highest order for the training of personnel in all important branches of health activity; and to attain self-sufficiency in Post-graduate Medical Education. By virtue of the Act, the Institute grants its own medical degrees and other academic distinctions. The degrees granted by the Institute under the All India Institute of Medical Sciences Act are recognized medical qualifications for the purpose of the Indian Medical Council Act and, notwithstanding anything contained therein, are deemed to be included in the First Schedule of that Act, entitling the holders to the same privileges as those attached to the equivalent awards from the recognized Universities of India. AIIMS was entrusted with the responsibility of mentoring the other medical colleges in the country. AIIMS operates autonomously under the [Ministry of Health and Family Welfare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Health_and_Family_Welfare_(India)) , Govt. of India, outside the ambit of the regulatory authority for medical education in the country, viz Medical Council of India. The intention to grant this kind of unique autonomy was that, this center would set the pace for medical education and research, not only in India, but also in Southeast Asia, which would concentrate on meeting the need for highly qualified manpower to look after the region’s expanding health care activities. That’s why even now, every year some MBBS seats are reserved for admitting overseas students.

**The Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY)3**was announced in 2003 with objectives of correcting regional imbalances in the availability of affordable/ reliable tertiary healthcare services and also to augment facilities for quality medical education in the country. As regards the 2nd objective of augmenting quality of Medical Education in the country, the Government’s action in the recent years is questionable and in my opinion the Government has erred by opening hastily without any preparation, so many AIIMS institutions in such a short period of time. As of now, AIIMS institutions are offering admission to 807 seats which are available across nine functional AIIMS institutions, that include – New Delhi, Rishikesh, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Jodhpur, Patna, Raipur, Guntur, and Nagpur. With an exception of  **AIIMS NewDelhi , in no other new AIIMS institution, adequate facilities for educating the so called elite Indian Medical graduate are available presently. To add to further confusion, the Government has approved 11 more AIIMS in June 2018 which will be established in other cities, the policy to have at least one AIIMS institution, in each state.** AIIMS Guntur and Nagpur began admission to its MBBS program, but their hospitals are not functional and are being run in temporary campus. Again, in August 2018, hospital(only OPD) of AIIMS Raebareli has been commissioned and we don’t know they may start admitting the students prematurely.

**Due to non availability of experienced faculty (from AIIMS like institutions) for recruitment for these newer institutions, teachers from any other medical colleges across the country, have been recruited for these new institutions. Without an explicit Undergraduate Medical Curriculum ( including the proper implementation plan, human resource, and also the clinical material, 2-3 batches of ‘Indian Medical Graduates’ have already, come out from some of these newer institutions. Unofficial sources quote that medical graduates have been released in to the community who have not even witnessed (forget about conducting) one single normal delivery during the course of their training. Who is to be blamed for such a pathetic situation? Thank God, fortunately the students who got admitted in these institutions are the best in the country! They may have studied the subjects themselves. Due to scarcity of teachers and also to tide over the crisis, the faculty members from any other medical colleges ( who were following Traditional UG curriculum ) have been recruited, who, now do not have access to the Training of Trainer Programs (RBCW- AETCOM ) offered by MCI because they are not now under the ambit of MCI. If we look at the existing curriculum now being followed at AIIMS NewDelhi, it is a ten years old curriculum (last revision 2009). Probably the busy teachers working over there (busy in research and ultra modern, sophisticated clinical practice) may not have had time to think of any educational reform for their students and continue teach the professionals for tomorrow, using yesterday’s curriculum. I don’t think AIIMS New Delhi has the machinery to train the heterogeneous group of large number of medical teachers from all the functioning AIIMS institutions spread across the country, which have already started admitting students.**

Indian’s doctors are highly reputed and are well accepted and respected across the globe But a couple of recent reports have cast serious doubts on the quality and ethics of the country's vast medical schooling system. World is observing  **the Indian system.**

New batch of MBBS students will get admitted both in all medical colleges of MCI and also in AIIMS institutions. The students in MCI medical colleges will start studying under new competency based curriculum and the students in AIIMS will follow the old traditional curriculum. What a paradox? Who is responsible for such an injustice? Are the students who are going to be admitted to these elite AIIMS institutions aware of what they will be getting over there? Who will blow the whistle for these innocent students?

Can the Health & FW ministry, who is directly controlling these AIIMS institutions, think of taking help of MCI to train the faculty over there? Many of the medical institutions in the country, including private institutions have been walking extra miles and are competing with AIIMS or other premiere institutions in the country in all India ranking and have the capabilities of helping these newer institutions in every aspect. The government must address this issue on war foot basis lest the very objective of correcting regional imbalances by establishment of AIIMS like institutions as per as per the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY, shall be defeated, apart from producing low quality doctor professionals.

1. Dr P F Kotur. MD(Anaesth), PhD(Med Edn)

References:

1. <https://www.mciindia.org/>
2. 2.

<https://www.aiims.edu/>

1. [pmssy-mohfw.nic.in/](http://pmssy-mohfw.nic.in/)
2. www.washington post.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/04/21