

# Specialists fly out, leave India to battle health woes

What We Need:  
More PG Seats

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Bangalore:** Every 10 minutes, a woman dies during childbirth in India. Lack of expert medical care during delivery is the reason for this. Increasingly, the lack of specialist doctors is being widely felt across the coun-

► **Better life, P 2**

try as only they, and not MBBS holders, can treat non-communicable diseases, which contribute 62% of the country's disease burden.

Though India has the largest number of medical institutions, the disparity in the number of seats allotted for post-graduate and undergraduate students is huge.

While the country has

### THE INDIAN STORY

COST INCURRED BY GOVT TO TRAIN A DOCTOR

Anywhere in India	At AIIMS, Delhi
₹ 25 lakh	₹ 1.5 crore

AIIMS DOCTORS FROM 1956-1997 BATCHES WHO IMMIGRATED OVERSEAS:

53%

Sources: Dr Shakti Gupta, HoD, Dept of Hospital Administration, AIIMS; Media Study Group, New Delhi, Dec 2006

47,688 UG seats in 381 medical colleges, the number of PG seats is 14,500, according to statistics by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) and Association of Healthcare Providers of India (AHPDI).

A comparison with developed countries like the US only highlights this disparity. For 19,000 UG seats, the US has 32,000 PG seats in clinical subjects.

Brain drain is another problem created by the low number of PG seats. Today, there are 29,451 Indian doctors serving in the UK alone. There are about 60,000 Indian doctors in the US, UK, Canada and Australia put together. With the best of talent opting to go out of the country, it's Indians who suffer.



# Angry medical students rally to Save the Doctor

Sport Black Armbands, Sweep Road To Protest A Lack Of Opportunity

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**W**earing white coats and black armbands, over 1,000 medics took to the streets on Monday evening. Cubbon Road was a sea of white as students from colleges across Karnataka held banners and shouted slogans against the vast gulf between undergraduate and post-graduate seats in medical colleges across in the country.

"There are many students who have wasted years trying to get a PG seat, and are still waiting. The number of PG seats is less than one-third of UG seats. Where should the rest of the MBBS degree holders go?" said Amith Kamath, a third-year medical student of SDUMC, Kolar.

As a symbolic protest under the 'Save the Doctor' movement, they participated in a rally from Manipal Centre to Bal Bhavan. The march ended with future healthcare providers wielding brooms to sweep the road. "This is our symbolic protest against the few PG seats available. This is what we'll end up doing if left with an MBBS degree," said Dr Navneet Motreja, national coordinator, Save the Doctor campaign.

"Equalize PG seats" was their motto. "Today, everyone wants a specialist. Even if patients come to us, we have to refer them to specialists. In such scenario, we're left with no option but to keep writing PG entrance test till we get a seat," said Dr Abhishek Kumar, MS Ramaiah Medical College.

The campaign was organized by the Indian Medical Association and the Association of Healthcare Providers India. The nationwide movement is aimed at urging policy makers in the country to redress the problem of PG seats. The protest was also held in cities like Mumbai, Jaipur, Hyderabad, Mysore, Guwahati and Hisar.



**A NEW BROOM:** The huge disparity between undergraduate and postgraduate seats in Indian universities deprives many MBBS graduates of the chance to specialize

### WHERE INDIA FALLS SHORT

NEET RATIO	
In the last NEET exam for PG admissions	
Number of applicants	90,000
Available seats	14,500

- ### TOP 10 KILLERS
- 1 Heart diseases
  - 2 Diarrhoeal diseases
  - 3 Chronic lower respiratory diseases
  - 4 Cerebrovascular diseases (stroke)
  - 5 Influenza and pneumonia
  - 6 Tuberculosis
  - 7 Low birth weight
  - 8 Mental diseases leading to suicide
  - 9 Liver diseases
  - 10 Accidents
- (Source: WHO Data/India)

### TRAINING DOCTORS

ANNUAL SEATS	INDIA	USA
Undergraduate	47,698	19,000
Postgraduate	14,500	32,000

### CAUSE OF DEATH

Cardiovascular diseases	20
Accidents and injuries	20
Neuro-psychiatric	19
Respiratory diseases	7
Cancer	6
Diabetes	2
Stroke and other causes	26

All figures in percentage



**QUEER RATIO:** Medics highlight their demands

## They found a better life

Continued from page 1

According to a white paper draft by MCI and AHPI, these doctors moved abroad mainly due to lack of higher medical education opportunities in India.

When it comes to top 10 causes of deaths in India, an MBBS doctor is not trained to treat any of the causes.

According to the draft, just by implementing the changes suggested by MCI, the number of postgraduate seats in clinical subjects can be increased from 14,500 to 38,500. And this can be achieved without diluting any standards of education and bringing about any new regulatory changes.

## 'Only hospitals, no doctors'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**C**ardiac surgeon Dr Devi Shetty analyzes the self-defeating situation in India.

### How is the skewed ratio between undergraduate and postgraduate medical seats affecting access to healthcare?

India has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world. Of the 28 million babies born every year, 5-6 million are delivered by Caesarean section. The women need gynaecologists to enable smooth delivery. Today, many women die during childbirth because there aren't enough specialized doctors around to treat them. We need 1.5 lakh gynaecologists but have just 40,000. The US has 5,000 postgraduate seats while India has just 450.



**QUIT INDIA?** Dr Devi Shetty pushes for more PG seats

There's a shortage of radiologists, who are so crucial for diagnosing any ailment even in cities.

### Why this restriction?

We in India believe that if we increase the number of seats, the value or quality

will go down. But that's not true. Therefore, we've restricted the number of postgraduate seats and deprived lakhs of MBBS doctors from becoming specialists, which is dangerous for the healthcare system in India. If we don't rectify the ratio now, there will be hospitals without doctors in our Tier 2 cities too.

### What's the solution?

The government must tell the Medical Council of India to increase the number of postgraduate seats significantly. When there are thousands of medical graduates who want to pursue specialization and are ready to spend years preparing for that coveted postgraduate seat, why are we depriving them and losing good doctors to other countries?