

# A medicine needed for this ailment: More MBBS docs, but not enough MDs

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**Bangalore:** India is producing doctors, but not enough specialists: this is the state of medical education in the country.

Consider the facts: There are 45,000 undergraduate (UG) medical seats in the country, but the number of post-graduate medical seats is only 12,000. Hence, despite having the largest number of medical institutions in the world, many MBBS doctors merely sit at home due to lack of adequate number of PG seats.

For example, in the last PG entrance exam held under NEET, over 1,10,000 doctors appeared for the 12,000 available seats. This points to an alarming shortfall.

To make matters worse, the government's decision to add an extra year of compulsory rural posting has worsened the situation. "The government has mandated that doctors, after their undergraduate course, need to have a year of rural stint in order to be eligible for the PG examination. However, there are only 2,600 vacant rural postings," says Dr Narendra Saini, general secretary, Indian Medical Association.

This essentially means that it will take almost seven years to become just an MBBS doctor and nearly 12 to 13 years to become a doctor of medicine.

"None of us are shunning our duty towards people living in rural areas. However, instead of adding another year to an already long medical course, rural posting can be made part of internship or PG courses. A specialised doctor is any day more capable of treating patients than an MBBS doctor," says Dr Devi Shetty, founder and chairman, Narayana Health Group.

Kalpajit Banki, an MBBS doctor from Agartala, says he has been jobless for the past six months. "I find the situation extremely grave. I have not been able to get a rural posting as the seats are very few. Because of this, I will not be eligible to sit for the PG exam. Though I am a doctor, I have not treated a single patient as there are many things I am yet to learn," he says, adding that he is looking for options abroad.

Kalpajit is in Bangalore at present to be



SPECIALIST MEDICAL COURSES	PG SEATS IN INDIA	PG SEATS IN USA
Psychiatry	376	1360
Emergency medicine	32	1748
TB & Chest disease	295	694
General medicine	2214	6643
Radiology	667	1143
Diabetology	49	251
Haematology (Blood cancer, Thalassemia)	13	523

a part of the "Save The Doctor" movement which aims to address the issue of shortage of specialist doctors in the country. The movement has been launched by Indian Medical Association (IMA) and Association of Healthcare Providers India (AHP) along with medical students' representatives across the nation.

According to experts, more than 30% of MBBS doctors in India look for options abroad due to lack of adequate number of PG seats. "The wait is too long. There is no guarantee as to when I will get into the PG course, as there are lakhs of doctors competing for the 12,000 seats. How long can I depend on my parents?," rues a student of MS Ramaiah College.

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