

IMA, AHPI support 'Save The Doctor' movement to equalise UG, PG Medical seats

Include rural posting into internship and post graduate training



JAMMU: Indian Medical Association (IMA) and Association of Healthcare Providers India (AHPI) along with medical students' representatives from across the country today announced a nationwide movement 'Save the Doctor' to equalize Under Graduation (UG) and Post Graduation (PG) medical seats. This mass movement is aimed to influence the policy makers and medical institutions in the country. Medical students want rural posting to be part of internship and postgraduate training. Over two to three lakh medical students are expected to support this movement across India. Pursuing a Post Graduation in any stream of medicine is essential for a doctor

to become a specialist such as Gynecologists, Neurologist, Surgeons, Radiologists etc. Today, India lacks specialist doctors due to the less number of (relevant/ desired) PG seats in medical institutions. Though India has the largest number of medical institutions, the disparity in the number of seats allotted for PG and UG students along with the mandatory rural posting are affecting young doctors and they end up spending 13 years merely studying. This also means that future of our healthcare system is at huge risk if things continue to remain the way it is; as senior specialist doctors/ surgeons retire in the future, there will be dearth of specialist doctors and surgeons in India. Dr. Devi Shetty, Treasurer, AHPI, said, "It is a sad plight that nearly two lakh young doctors in our country at the peak of their youth spend few years in coaching classes mugging Multiple Choice Questions rather than treating patients and learning the art of healing. These young doctors under the right circumstances can significantly improve the quality of health care offered to our citizens." He also added, "Every Indian household once dreamt of making their child a doctor, but today it is considered as a costly and a tedious process." There are 45,600 UG seats which is likely to reach 50,000 shortly due to the progressive steps taken by the MCI. Whereas, there are only 12,000 PG seats which most of the doctors prefer to choose. In comparison, in a developed country such as USA, there are 19,000 UG seats and 32,000 PG and fellowship seats. With a pass rate of 80% to 90% nearly 40,000 doctors graduate every year and compete for 12,000 seats with their batch mates and over a lakh seniors. In the last PG entrance exam under NEET, over 1,10,000 doctors appeared for the test to claim one of the 12,000 seats. Adding to all, the one year compulsory rural posting has worsened the situation. Dr. Narendra Saini, Secretary General, IMA, said, "Indian Medical Association supports rural posting. But, in the present situation making it compulsory is not feasible because there is no structured posting in rural areas. Every PG student must do six months of rural posting as part of their course/ internship." He also added, "Every medical officer during their tenure is entitled for atleast 4-5 promotions. For every promotion, one year rural posting can be made mandatory." To validate this, the World Health Statistics has pointed out that India has 0.9 beds for 1000 population, which is way below the global average beds of 2.9 beds. A grave example of the state of Indian healthcare is that lakhs of young pregnant women who die during delivery is a testimony to show how lack of PG seats is taking away precious lives. There are 28 million babies born every year in India, which means at least 28 million deliveries need to be handled annually. To perform this number the country requires that many gynecologists, unfortunately we have only 40,000 practicing gynecologists and most of them are practicing mainly in cities. Our government is spending lakhs of rupees to reduce Maternity Mortality Rate without great success. What people and policy makers fail to realize is that it's not due to lack of money that young pregnant women are dying, but because the country does not have enough qualified gynecologists and neonatologist to take care of the mother and baby. Dr. Navneet Motreja, Coordinator, Campaign - Save the Doctor, said, "If situation does not change we are not far from desperate measures like importing surgeons from other countries. Recently, due to public pressure Brazilian PM agreed to import 6,000 specialist doctors from Cuba." This movement is a call for the nation to take action to save the future. One can login to www.savethedoctor.in and post an appeal which will then be sent to the Union Health Minister. World changing events never happened due to the power of individuals, they only happened due to the "Power of purpose".