

## LETTER

### Unjust exclusion from medical education of medical teachers with MSc (Medicine) and PhD (Medicine) qualifications

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I would like to bring to the notice of academia and the public the plight of medical teachers (unjustly called “non-medical teachers”) with MSc (Faculty of Medicine) and PhD (Faculty of Medicine) qualifications, who are being systematically excluded from teaching posts by the erstwhile Medical Council of India (MCI), and now, by the National Medical Commission (NMC).

Before discussing the current situation, let me briefly describe the significance of this specially created course. The MSc course was first started in India at Madras Medical College in 1963, on the recommendation of the Mudaliar Committee, appointed by the Government of India. This step was intended to address the chronic shortage of teachers in basic medical sciences such as Anatomy, Physiology, Biochemistry, Microbiology and Pharmacology [1, 2]. Subsequently, many prestigious institutions such as the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, the Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research, Pondicherry, Kasturba Medical College, Manipal, and various health universities in the different states, such as Dr NTR University of Health Sciences, Vijayawada, have introduced these courses and have been producing MSc (Medicine) postgraduates in these disciplines for decades.

Although, the course was initially included in the First Schedule of the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 (Act 102 of 1956), dated December 30, 1956 [3] as a recognised medical qualification, these qualifications were unscrupulously removed by later amendments.

As per the NMC guidelines in the NMC Gazette dated October 28, 2020, the MSc (Medicine) qualification has been completely derecognised with the statement “appointment of these teachers is subject to non-availability of medical persons”, vide NMC Notification No NMC/MCI 35(1)98-med. (ii)123627, Schedule II, Point 5, Page 67 [4]. In addition, the latest NMC Gazette on Teacher Eligibility Qualifications in Medical Institutions Regulations, 2022, dated February 14, 2022, does not include any mention of the MSc (Medicine) and PhD (Medicine) qualifications for appointments in the

Microbiology and Pharmacology departments. This will affect the livelihood of hundreds of teachers immediately, vide NMC Notification No. F. No. NMC/MCI-23(I)/2021-MED, Point 3.3, Page 27 [5]

It is a well-known fact that faculty shortages in these basic medical subjects has always haunted medical colleges. Especially at a time when numerous new medical colleges are opening throughout India, denying recognition to the MSc (Medicine) and PhD (Medicine) degrees is going to have a disastrous effect. Without a strong foundation in these subjects, it is very difficult to move to an understanding of the other subjects in medicine. Therefore, it will lead to the production of inadequately qualified medical professionals and be harmful to the community at large.

The whole world is striving to achieve the best possible progress in various fields by encouraging an inter-disciplinary approach. Teachers with an MSc (Medicine) degree bring in the much required diversity in perspectives which is very important for young medical students (since they come from varied disciplines at their graduation level including Life Sciences, Physiotherapy, Veterinary Science, Pharmacy, Homeopathic Medicine, Ayurvedic Medicine, Dentistry, Allopathy etc [1, 6, 7]. This diversity in perspective helps students, develop into well rounded and socially conscious physicians. By denying this diversity, the NMC is diminishing the richness of medical education.

By providing them with equal opportunities, professionals with an MSc or PhD in Medicine can be a significant potential pool for research and development in medicine for the country. Denying them equal opportunities to earn a livelihood, by treating the MBBS as superior to non-MBBS postgraduate degrees, not only hampers their professional growth but will also adversely impact medical education and society as a whole. It reflects the mindset of a society which rates medicine as a superior profession when compared to others. Such a mindset discourages young medical doctors from developing an attitude of respect to other professions which is very regressive.

It is time to recognise the services rendered by these professionals to Indian medical education over decades and recognise these qualifications instituted by the same authorities. This will give them their rightful place in the system.

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