



Post Graduate Psychiatric Education in India - Current Practice and Future Directives

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INTRODUCTION

In this evolving era of medical sciences, one must take a moment to go back to the roots and see where it all started and how the medical education in Psychiatry evolved over the years to reach where it is now. The first doctor of medicine (M.D) Psychiatry course was started 7 decades ago by Medical College of Patna in the year 1941. The Medical Council of India, a statutory organization founded in 1933, since provides direction for the development of psychiatric education, including its goals and standards. It has maintained a permanent Committee on Postgraduate Medical Education since 1956, whose job it is to create guidelines, study curricula, and the minimal standards for teaching facilities. Additionally, it upholds the calibre of instructors and tests given by colleges to ensure that standards are uniform.¹ Today there are around 700 budding psychiatrists completed MD every year in our country.²

Masters in Psychiatry can be pursued under two courses in India- MD Course and DNB course, after completing the MBBS degree. The training of post-graduate students in psychiatry in India is greatly aided by general hospital psychiatry units (psychiatry units connected to medical colleges). In addition to this, mental institutions offer post-graduate psychiatry trainees teaching and training facilities.³ In today's time there is a rise of super-specialty courses, which psychiatry graduates can now pursue in India itself, including DM as well as fellowships in the fields of deaddiction, child and adolescent psychiatry, Geriatric Mental Health and Forensic Psychiatry. The new era will see a shift to a more niche and specialized approach to both psychiatric training and clinical practice as well.

Post Graduate Training Program

As per Medical Council of India (MCI) a postgraduate is broadly expected to develop skills in the following domains

- Clinical- A post-graduate specialist who has received the necessary training should be able to identify the community's health requirements, be quali-

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fied to manage medical issues successfully, and be informed of latest developments in his field.

- Teaching the graduate student should learn the fundamentals of teaching and guiding medical and paramedical pupils.
- Research- Additionally, she or he should be familiar with the fundamentals of research methodology and library consultation techniques.⁴

Problems in Current Practice

The super-specialty courses, both MD and DNB, focus mainly on traditional methods of training in psychiatry and have certain problem areas as discussed below.

The emphasis on core descriptive psychopathology is declining with a more check-list based approach to make diagnosis and hope for a quick treatment response based on pharmacological interventions, sidelining psychotherapy and other somatic treatment modalities.⁵

-There is a huge discrepancy in the teaching standards. Different institutes' psychiatry training programs differ from one another. Premier teaching institutions offer structured training while many new colleges struggle with lack of a consistent guidance.

Psychotherapy and elementary sciences are not taught properly in many institutes. MCI does not mandate clinical psychologist in the teaching curriculum.⁶

More emphasis on community psychiatry, forensic psychiatry and consultation liaison also needs to be a part of the existing curriculum.

Future Scope

Along with the primary goal of providing expertise in the field of Psychiatry, The Medical Council of India also proposes the wholistic development of the student in other spheres like research and teaching as well.⁴ However, there is a wide lacuna in both these fields where students learn to be researchers

and teachers along-with clinicians. Along with developing clinical skills, it is a must that students get proper guidance to develop collateral skills of leadership, communication, and professionalism as well. The young doctors of today are the guides of the next generation, hence, they play a pivotal role in guiding young MBBS doctors and motivating them to pursue Psychiatry.

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic we saw a shift in both the traditional methods of teaching and clinical practice, with a major chunk of work, conferences, education, and even patient consultations being shifted to the online platforms. This opens-up new avenues of growth for the futures generations where proficient use of technology including online modes of communication, educational presentation and medical consultation will be a must for the future generations and hence, these values and skills need to be integrated into the current curriculum of post graduate course as well for the holistic growth and development of the future generations of modern psychiatrists.

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