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Emergency Medicine in India - First Step towards Capacity Building

**Arva Koushik¹, Aiman Perween Afsar²,
Tarun Kumar Suvvari³, Lokesh Edara⁴,
Arunachalam Einstein⁵,
Ashima Sharma⁶**

¹Emergency Medicine, Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences, Hyderabad, Telangana; ²MBBS Student, Maulana Azad Medical College, New Delhi; ³MBBS Student, Dr. NTR University of Medical Sciences, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh; ⁴Assistant Professor, Medicine, WMU School of Medicine, MI 49007, United States; ⁵Professor, Emergency Medicine, Providence Regional Medical Centre Everett, Washington; ⁶Professor, Emergency Medicine, Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences, Hyderabad, Telangana

Sir,

India is witnessing the momentum to increase the postgraduate seats in the speciality of Emergency Medicine because of the clause of the mandatory department by 2022 in all teaching hospitals. The need was realised way back in 2009 when the Medical Council of India (present National Medical Council) had recognised emergency medicine as a separate academic department. The National Board of Education also acknowledged the same in 2013. However, over the last 12 years, only 144 MD and 139 DNB Emergency Medicine seats have been granted by the Officiating Medical bodies.^{1,2} This should be viewed seriously in context of the standard treatment guidelines for most common emergencies e.g., Time is Muscle as in acute coronary event, Time is Brain for stroke, Golden Hour of Resuscitation for trauma, the first hour sepsis bundle and the rapid triage of a Covid-19 patient.

Sir, we want to bring to your notice the comparative statistics of our postgraduate seats to the other countries. There are 467044 total active physicians in 2020 in emergency medicine in the United States (population of 330 million), with an overall density of emergency physicians per 100,000 population as 14.9.³ We are

the second-largest populated country in the world (with more than 1.36 billion people) and four times more populated than the US. 467044 casualty cases reach our emergency departments every year with a 3% steadily increasing number of emergencies yearly.⁴ Unfortunately, our Emergency trained physician density is very dismal. The USA has one emergency physician for 6757 people. If we want to improve our emergency medical care to the same standards, we should also aim for the same ratio and build a force of 192390 emergency physicians to cater to our population. This can be achieved by at least allotting **11,340 pg** seats in emergency medicine every year.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has promulgated a desirable doctor-population ratio as 1:1000. India plans to have MBBS admissions from 83,000 (current number) to 104,000 by 2024 to achieve one physician to 1000 people. However, there is a further roadblock as postgraduate seats are currently only 45000 with a significant disparity of specialities. An unpublished survey of medical interns in India has shown that young doctors are more willing to choose emergency medicine as their postgraduate course.

Using the mathematical equations suggested by James Holliman et al,⁵ supply should be equal to number of Emergency Physicians at the beginning of the year plus annual residency graduates minus annual attrition; demand should be 5 full-time equivalent positions/ED X the number of hospital EDs.

The Medical Board should encourage the growth of this much-needed speciality for improving early resuscitation and stabilization of critically ill patients. We strongly recommend a fair share of 20% of the present total postgraduate seats for emergency medicine. It will not be an easy task as it will still take 40 years to realise the dream of appropriate and timely emergency care of patients.

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