

Approval for 10,000 more MBBS seats from 2014 will not only bridge the gap in the doctor-patient ratio, but will also give a chance to more students to make their dream of entering this profession a reality

What the Doctor Orders

DR PARAMVIR SINGH MANGAT

WITH over 35,000 students passing out each year from over 300 colleges, the gap between the number of MBBS doctors required and available is widening each year. Each year thousands of bright students take the medical entrance test with the dreams of becoming a doctor. Many parents, too, would love to achieve this career ambition for their children. Even though the students nurse an ambition to become a doctor and work towards it from Class X onwards, it has been observed that most of them have a very vague idea of the practical side of this profession. The sad part is that parents, too, have little idea of the profession. Unless they themselves are doctors, or have someone from the profession in the family, the information they have is very sketchy. For many parents it is a proxy fulfilling of ambitions. So, in a majority of cases this career is chosen between confused kids and parents with their own agendas. For most, it is an achievement, and a reaffirmation of their intelligence and talent — like scaling a mountain. However, what they do not understand is that they cannot get off this peak, as it is a path to which they have to stay committed for the rest of their lives.

What you give...

It is important to go into any profession with one's eyes open — one should know what the profession demands, and what it gives. The medical profession involves a long gestation period, with a basic MBBS course which is five-and-a-half years long. The course is information intensive, and academically demanding, and that is why most medical students do not have the luxury of enjoying breaks and free time, which is part of many other professional courses.

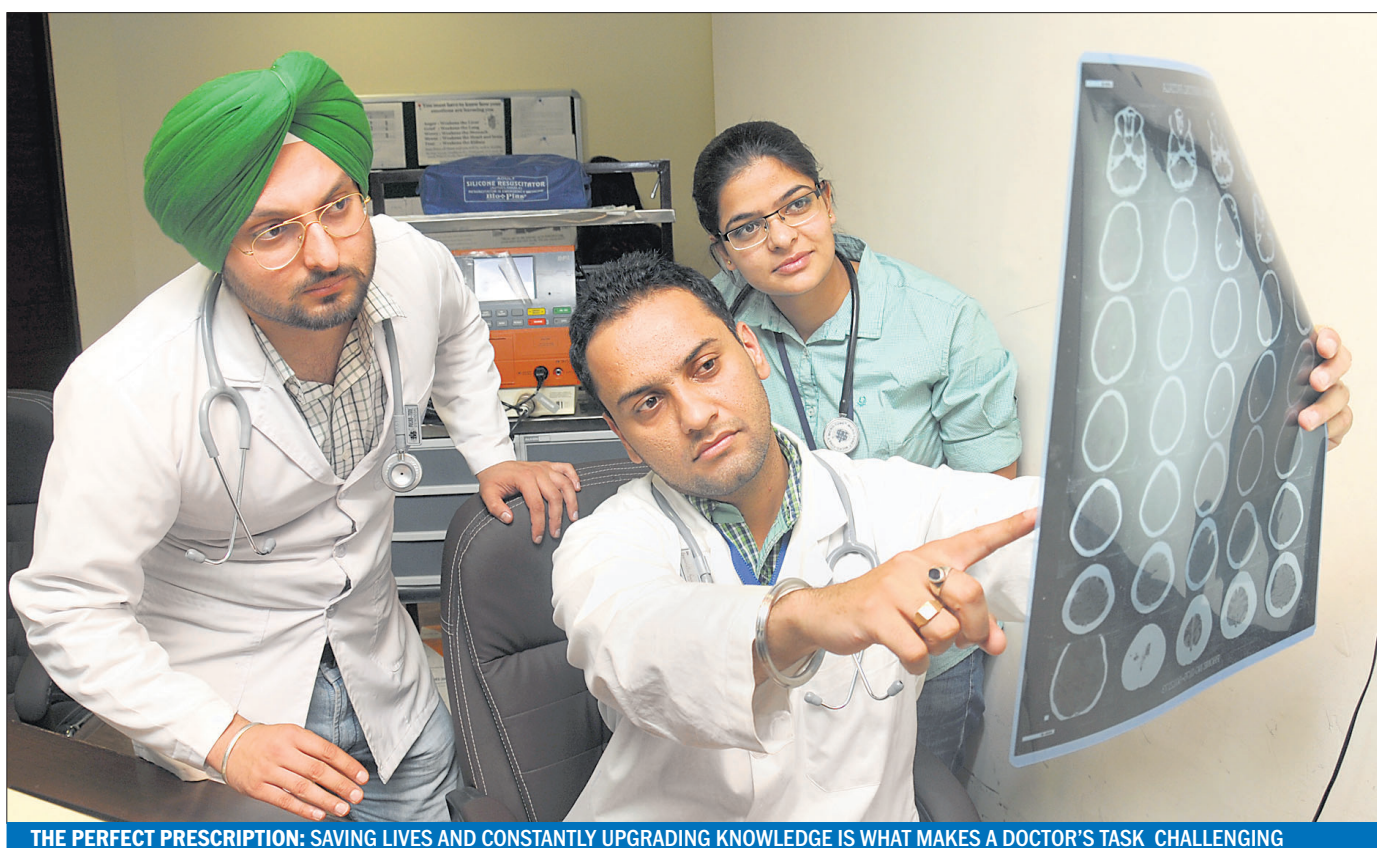
In today's world most medical graduates need a post graduation degree or specialisation to survive. This comes in after the basic course, with another highly competitive entrance exam. It takes three years to do a speciality course, after which one can either do private practice or join an academic institution. Getting super specialisation, for example in cardiology, means another entrance test, and another three years. So first qualification: be ready to study for long years, and settle late in life.

The knowledge in the medical field is growing by leaps and bounds, and no one in this profession can survive without reading to keep up with the latest in the area of interest. So that brings us to the second demand — a lifelong affair with books, journals and research papers.

Many youngsters hear about top surgeons and other doctors making pots of money, and this becomes a goal. If money is one's ambition, there are many other professions where one can earn it much more easily, and much less guiltily. In fact, money will be the worst motive for anyone to join this profession, as it may erode ethics, which is the foundation of the profession.

What you get...

A doctor is respected by people in all walks of life. Even in today's money-minded scenario, the public image of a medical man as someone who saves lives is unsullied. A doctor's knowledge and sincerity does make a huge difference to the lives of his patients and brings in tremendous job satisfaction to him. There are many occasions to rejoice, when patients go home happy and eternally grateful. The patient trusts the doctor with his most valuable possession — himself. This is a humbling privilege, not experienced in any other profession.



THE PERFECT PRESCRIPTION: SAVING LIVES AND CONSTANTLY UPGRADING KNOWLEDGE IS WHAT MAKES A DOCTOR'S TASK CHALLENGING

A REASON TO SMILE

Dental science

India is a hot destination to get that perfect smile at a fraction of cost compared to many other parts of the world. Dentistry is one of the most desirable professions today. This career offers high wages and a flexible work schedule. You also get the opportunity to be your own boss if you choose to start your own practice.

This profession deals with the inspection and treatment of teeth, gums and other parts of the oral cavity. A dentist takes care of problems affecting the teeth. Common procedures are removal, correction and replacement of decayed, damaged or lost teeth. However, this career profile is changing rapidly, creating many opportunities and challenges for students.

Dentistry as a profession has become more demanding and because of its promising nature, a lot of young aspirants are entering this profession. Government colleges are usually a preferred destination for studying, though the number of seats available there is limited, as is the number of colleges in



comparison to private institutions.

The Bachelor of Dental Science (BDS) degree programme is a five-year course that is divided into four parts each of one-year duration followed by a year of internship. The Dental Council of India registers those who have completed the BDS to practice dentistry. After completion of this degree, many graduates choose to join a government hospital to get hands-on experience.

A BDS degree alone is not considered enough to succeed in this profession so

you will have to go for a Master of Dental Science (MDS). Continuous education is an integral and an essential part of this profile. You have to keep participating in education programmes based on your specialisation throughout your career. You simply can't escape this aspect no matter whether you are a new entrant or have spent 40 years in practice.

Upgrading of knowledge is required, even in order to renew your licence to practice on an annual basis. It's also important to be aware of the developments in the medical field and pharmaceuticals.

You can also pursue various certificate and diploma courses to upgrade and update your knowledge in this field.

Some upcoming specialisation are: Endodontics, Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, Oral Surgery, Orthodontics, Pedodontics, Periodontics and Prosthodontics.

In need of the healing touch

Ironically, while the country has the largest number of medical colleges in the world and is blinking brightly on the radar of medical tourism destination all over the world, the doctor:patient ratio is a dismal 1:2000. The number of doctors passing out each year is not enough to fulfill the healthcare needs of the teeming millions in our country and the educational institutions need to gear up to increase intake. Recently the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs gave approval for 10,000 more MBBS seats in colleges across the country which is likely to bridge the gap to some extent in the next few years. The key challenges of medical education are a poor accreditation process, lack of skilled faculty, curriculum with inconsequential detail, complicated nature of the selection process, etc. Lack

of proper induction for first year students as well as lack of practical exposure are some of the challenges that students can expect in their journey of becoming "healers".

Institute watch

The choice of the right institute is paramount and a large number of students grapple with this after getting through the entrance exams. Choosing between a government or a private institute is a major issue for medical aspirants. Government colleges have experienced faculty and an established reputation. Besides the fee is also very less as compared to that in the private colleges. Government institutes have standard equipment and a well-established method of teaching and as students are admitted on merit basis, one has a healthy competitive environment there. Along with this the government institutes also score a point in providing more practical experience to the students as the number of patients visiting the attached hospitals is much more than those in private hospitals. And this is a well established fact that students graduating from government set ups score better when it comes to job placements or specialised training (MD/MS) within or outside the country.

As for the private colleges they strive for improvement and introduce new fea-

tures to gain reputation. So students get exposure to the latest equipment and treatment methods there. The faculty depends on the college and can vary significantly from one institute to another. Several private colleges have established a name for themselves by providing state-of-the-art infrastructure, better student-teacher ratio, and experienced faculty besides having state-of-the-art campus and hostel facilities.

Medicine is not a course but a calling. And if one goes into it, with the right attitude, and a mind to serve, one can lead a very useful and personally satisfying life. So those young people, who have these ambitions in mind, are most welcome to join the club!

— The writer is Registrar/ Senior Resident, Department of General Surgery, PGIMER, Chandigarh and Vice-President, Association of Resident doctors

REGION'S STATISTICS

When it comes to health education in Punjab, the state has a separate university for health and medical related education — Baba Farid University of Health Sciences. All institutions for medical education in Punjab are affiliated to this university. Punjab has 10 MBBS colleges. Three of these colleges are offering education under the control of Government of Punjab and the remaining seven colleges are functioning under the ownership of different trusts in Punjab. The total intake capacity of the 10 MBBS colleges functioning in Punjab is 1,145 seats of which 350 seats are in the government colleges. Dayanand Medical College and Hospital, Ludhiana, Government Medical College, Patiala, Christian Medical College, Ludhiana and Government Medical College, Amritsar are among the top colleges in the state. Haryana has five colleges for MBBS degree and total number of seats is around 550 with Pt. B.D. Sharma, PGIMS, Rohtak, Bhagat Phool Singh Govt. Medical College for Women, Khanpur Kalan, Sonapat and M.M. Medical College, Mullana Ambala being the top choices for medical aspirants in the state. There are two MBBS colleges in Himachal Pradesh and these two colleges are running under the control of the state government. These are Dr. Rajendra Prasad Government Medical College, Tanda and Indira Gandhi Medical College, Shimla. Each of these colleges are approved with an intake capacity of 100 students per year for the MBBS course according to the norms of the Medical Council of India. Chandigarh has one college with an intake of 100 students each year.



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