



Guest Editorial

Sustaining and Strengthening Psychiatry Teachers' Training in India: A Psychiatry Teacher's Perspective

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India has a huge burden of mental illnesses, and the treatment gap for mental illnesses is more than 85%, as per the recent National Mental Health Survey.^[1] A shortage of mental health manpower is attributed as a potential factor for the significant treatment gap.^[1] Due to an inadequate number of psychiatrists, people seek consultation for mental health problems from general physicians and nonqualified practitioners. The general physicians (primary care physicians), who are usually medical graduates (MBBS doctors), often face difficulty in identifying mental illnesses or treating them due to inadequate training in psychiatry during their medical graduation.

Postgraduate courses in psychiatry have been recently started in several new medical colleges.^[2] In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of MD seats in psychiatry.^[3] It indicates that a large number of medical colleges where psychiatry post-graduation was initiated were having undergraduate teaching of psychiatry, but they didn't have postgraduate teaching of psychiatry. The psychiatry teachers of those institutes don't have experience or knowledge of teaching postgraduate residents of psychiatry. This lack of experience in PG psychiatry teaching is also expected to cause poor quality of teaching of psychiatry to the postgraduate trainees.^[4-7]

The current competency-based medical education implemented by the Medical Council of India (MCI) (now national medical commission, popularly known as NMC) focuses on enhancing the teaching skills of psychiatry postgraduate trainees along with their clinical and research skill enhancement.^[6,8,9] To enhance and sustain the teaching skills of psychiatry teachers in India, the following strategies may be useful.

1. Initiating postgraduate courses in the psychiatric departments of all the medical colleges so that the teachers will get an opportunity for undergraduate and postgraduate training. This will also solve the deficit of mental health manpower in the country.
2. Training of the teachers of psychiatry through a series of foundation lectures focusing on teaching techniques by the NMC/MCI.
3. Similar to the mandatory training course for medical faculties on "Basic biomedical research" by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), a course module on "Basic course of medical teaching" may be designed, which may be made mandatory for the promotion of the faculties, so that every faculty of psychiatry enroll themselves under it to enhance their teaching skills.
4. As the conference is an interesting platform to share knowledge and teach, psychiatry teachers should present papers, symposia, or posters at various conferences to enhance their teaching skills. The NMC should also evaluate the number of papers/posters/symposia presented by

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the psychiatry faculty members during their personal promotion.

5. The Indian Psychiatric Society should focus on developing certain teaching and training programs for psychiatry teachers to enhance their teaching skills.
6. As the district mental health program is getting expanded to most of the districts of the country, most of the psychiatry departments of the medical colleges are involved in teaching and training the medical officers about the identification and management of common mental illnesses. This is a great opportunity for the psychiatry teachers to be involved in the teaching and training programs of the medical officers. This may help the psychiatry teachers to strengthen and sustain their teaching skills as well as broaden them
7. Doing outreach activities and conducting workshops in the community and school also give an opportunity for the psychiatry teachers to enhance their teaching and training skills.

Strengthening and sustaining the teaching skills will largely depend on individual efforts. An individual's interest in teaching, getting opportunities to teach, and continuing to strive to improve one's own teaching is necessary to sustain and strengthen psychiatry teacher's teaching skills in India.

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