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Perspective

NExT - A Game Changer of Competency-Based Medical Education?

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National Medical Commission (NMC) declared the National Exit Test (NExT) mock test 2023 on July 28 by issuing government regulations.[1] However, continuously faced with a lot of resistance from medical students and faculty, it was deferred. The reasons cited included the need for prior preparation for the examination, logistics, and determining the curriculum, type, administrative agency, and format of the mock and final examination. Furthermore, students wanted more time to prepare for the new examination. The resident doctors in India thanked NMC for the deferral of the examination and are hoping for a student-friendly draft. NExT examination is planned for granting registration to doctors. It is the basis for postgraduate seat allocation, replacing the MBBS final examination and the National Eligibility Entrance Test Postgraduate (NEET PG). It is believed to be one of the best solutions for bringing uniformity to medical education to get global recognition.[2] This assessment is the final journey of competency-based medical education, which all expert medical educationists in India probably envisioned to bring uniformity in medical education.

The students and faculty raised many concerns. The students are anxious about the examination pattern. Most students expressed the undue pressure of NExT, the tiring examination schedule, and no clarity. They felt the shortage of time for preparation and practice tests. Some even argued that it was a violation of the NMC Act 2019. Many said they were unfamiliar with the Computer Based Test (CBT) examination. The majority of the students described the NExT examination as "anti-student." The confused MBBS students say, 'Try NExT year' despite assurance from the officials that NExT is easier than NEET and the NExT syllabus is on the same line as NEET PG.

The practical and ideological problems were highlighted by many faculty. They opined that state medical universities should be free to administer the qualifying examination. Indian medical graduates are already being assessed for these skills during the final MBBS part II university practical examinations as per NMC. Faculty opinion is NExT will neither benefit the students nor the healthcare system in any way. It may divert the attention from bedside clinical learning to the mushrooming of coaching classes for NExT.

The faculty raises many concerns. With the establishment of new medical colleges to overcome the medical workforce's deficiency, will we face a

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shortage of doctors if trained graduates who do not clear NExT and are prevented from practicing medicine? Multiple attempts for NExT will lead to a lack of interns and resident doctors, leading to the collapse of medical education and health care. Can we justify the MCQ mode of examination for PG entrance for medical licensing?

NExT, will it be a game changer for Competency-Based Medical Education (CBME)? Can it bring uniformity in medical education and improve the quality of patient care? Will it be a failure of the CBME medical education and health system?

Let us wait for the future to answer the questions.

Conflict of Interest: None

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