BRAIN DRAIN AND DISILLUSIONMENT OF OUR YOUNGER GENERATION WITH MEDICAL PROFESSION; A CHALLENGE TO RECKON

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CAPSULE SUMMARY

Medical education in Pakistan is increasingly losing its appeal due to high costs, long training periods, poor working conditions, limited career prospects, and low healthcare investment. These factors are fueling burnout and the migration of young doctors abroad, creating a growing shortage of healthcare professionals and further straining the country's healthcare system.

Medicine is a challenging career that requires a lot of dedication and discipline from students, in order to succeed in it. Various motivational factors incline students to a life of the medical profession[1].

Becoming a doctor is an incredible achievement,but it's not the right path for everyone as it takes almost a decade to reach destination after 12 years of basic education. Embarking on the life of medical practice without the proper enthusiasm is not enough to withstand the immense amount of stress involved. The growing number of vacant seats reflects changing trends, with parents and students increasingly reluctant to opt for medical education. Exorbiant tuition fees, limited career prospects, and difficult working conditions for young doctors are some of the decisive factors in countries like ours.

Pakistan's healthcare system is overburdened where the doctor-to-patient ratio is 1:1300, significantly lower than the World Health Organization's recommended ratio of 1:1000. The challenges faced by Pakistan's healthcare system include insufficient funding, (only 0.9% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on healthcare), inadequate healthcare workforce and infrastructure, less focus on preventive health, inequitable distribution of resources, and brain drain[2]. These factors have led the future generation to reassess whether the long haul of medical education guarantees a stable professional future.

The overwhelming workload of long shifts, night calls, and stressful conditions creates burnout and job dissatisfaction among healthcare professionals, affecting their mental and physical health. Healthcare professionals' reduced productivity and high turnover rates further strain the limited workforce, consequently compromising quality of care[3]. Moreover, due to the current economic crises, qualified healthcare professionals migrate abroad for better pay packages, professional growth opportunities & quality of life.

Due to this, Pakistan now has a critical shortfall of trained medical personnel, leading to overburdened healthcare facilities and diminished quality of care[4].

One in three medical students intends to migrate abroad after graduation due to a lack of resources and mismanagement in Pakistan. This has been adversely affecting Pakistan's healthcare system[5].

One of the major indicators of laying stress on health of the citizens is the ratio of spending on health as a percentage of GDP. The developed nations like Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) spend from 8.8 to 12.7% of GDP on healthcare. The highest spending on healthcare is in USA (16.6% of GDP)[6]. In contrast to these the spending on health in Pakistan remains less than 1% of the GDP[7]. This clearly highlights the relative lack of importance placed on the health sector in our resource- constrained country.

With rapidly growing population needs and continuously evolving public health challenges, every healthcare system must remain adaptable, acknowledge its limitations, and strengthen its weaknesses by learning from healthcare models around the world. Although there is an increase in human resources, this growth is not enough to cater for the needs of the population. These challenges need comprehensive policy formulation focused on increase in healthcare funding, good service

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structure and allocation of equity-based resources[8].

Key strategies to reduce the disillusionment of younger generation include improved service structure, appropriate pay packages, better working conditions & support groups for burn out coping strategies

Working on these crucial issues can lessen the impending crises of the shortage of healthcare professionals.

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