

Selection of medical students: a timely challenge

New trends in medical education are emerging rapidly in the SEARO region, increasing the scope for research and publication in the field. Several articles in the current issue of SEAJME highlight innovations in teaching, learning and assessment, together with other methods of enhancing educational outcomes.

The invited article on Practice in Medical Education focuses on international trends in medical education with selection considered as the “first assessment” in the medical programme. The authors emphasise the timely need for valid, reliable and reproducible selection methods in order to recruit and retain doctors who will practice in the country that trained them. The article also provides an overview on selection methodologies of other countries such as Australia, UK, United States, New Zealand, and Canada, while comparing the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Sifting the “smart” from the “daft” is the objective of a fit-for-purpose admission test. A “smart healthcare professional” is the one who has the right blend of competencies to cater for health needs in local, regional and global contexts. Therefore, defining the ideal healthcare professional in terms of competencies will be the first task of an effective admission test. Once such competencies have been identified, the best possible tools should be selected to assess the applicant’s potential in achieving those competencies. In the past, however, there has been a tendency to use only the tools that are easy to administer as admission tests. This tendency will invariably lead to selecting the unsuitable, resulting in profound implications on the profession and the society. If such implications are to be avoided, admission tests need to be bold and innovative to select the most suitable candidate. In this sense, an admission test can be viewed as a data collection process to build a profile of each applicant in terms of their potential to achieve the required competencies. It is essential to ensure that an admission test is developed using the right blend of assessment tools to select the right applicant who will deliver the right healthcare for the 21st century.

In conclusion, selection processes should be designed to recruit the most able and suitable applicants to work in each country’s health services, without merely selecting students based on high academic qualifications. It is important to identify such challenges in student recruitment and adopt methods to achieve better outcomes.

The ultimate aim should be to produce a medical practitioner who can cater to the health needs of the country and the SEARO region in general.

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References:

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