



Parents: Merit students denied medical, dental seats of choice

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Chaos reigned on Sunday as dental and medical seat aspirants and their parents thronged the Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) office to land a seat during the mop-up round of allotment only to be frustrated with the authorities' "unreasonable terms and conditions".

There were logistical issues like not enough time being given to arrange for demand drafts to make fee payments. But the biggest cause of heartburn was the KEA prohibiting those who were allotted medical and dental seats in the second round of counselling from participating in the mop-up round.

MOP-UP ROUND

Parents complained that though there were enough dental and medical seats left in government colleges, the KEA had enabled students with lower ranks to apply afresh and get them. Reshma H, parent of a NEET candidate, said: "I and my husband are dentists and my daughter too wants to be in the same profession. In the first and second rounds, we got a seat in a college which was No 18 in our choice list. But we surrendered it hoping to get one in some good government colleges during the mop-up round." But the August 23 notification of KEA has rendered aspirants ineligible to try for a dental seat in a better college in the mop-up round.



Photo for representation only

CONFUSION OVER SEATS

What does KEA notification say

The KEA is inviting fresh applications for allotment of medical and dental seats which remained unfilled after the completion of the second round (including any stray vacancies) seat allotment from NEET-2017 qualified candidates and who have not been allotted any seat through KEA or at All India / DGHS or from any board / agency. Candidates, who have been given dental seats, can participate for medical seats but not for dental seats again. Those who have been allotted medical seats are not eligible.

"We surrendered the seat because we wanted some good college for our daughter. Now KEA has asked students to apply afresh, which means the lower rank holders can hope for good seats, despite the fact that we have been working and struggling to get high rank and good seat," rued Reshma.

ma. The KEA rule, however, allows dental seat allottees to apply for medical seats. "My daughter wants dental, why would she apply for a medical seat?" asked an agitated Reshma.

Director of Medical Education S Sacchidanand, however, said: "I don't know why there's a confusion. Dental students can participate in counselling for the mop-up round."

Manjunath P, another parent, said: "Do KEA and the medical education department even value a good rank or is their task just to fill up seats? The KEA counselling schedules and notifications have pushed me into depression."

MS Basavaraj, chief medical officer at the University of Mysore, said his daughter was allotted a seat in Al Ameen Medical College, Vijayapura, in the second round. While candidates selected in the first round had the option to shift to other colleges in the second round, his daughter enjoyed no such luxury as she had landed a seat in the subsequent round.

"Forty-seven seats under the general merit (private) quota were declared vacant for the mop-up round on the intervening night of August 25 and 26, and 24 of these seats are available in Bengaluru. Now those with a lower rank and coming through fresh applications will be given a chance but not my daughter," lamented Basavaraj.

KEA officials, however, continued with the process. The mop-up round for undergraduate NEET counselling will be held till August 28.

₹50L: What H1N1 costs some patients

Critical Cases Saddle Families With Huge Bills, Highlight Need For Prevention

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1,000 AND COUNTING

- **Mumbai:** A Chembur man battling complications from H1N1 influenza infection has run up a bill of over Rs 50 lakh after spending 67 days in a south Mumbai hospital.
- An Alibaug family is staring at a bill of over Rs 25 lakh for their daughter's over one-month stay in the ICU to beat the virus.

The H1N1 influenza, though treatable in most cases, has left some families with a huge monetary burden this season. People have paid from Rs 15 lakh to Rs 50 lakh, sums associated with complex cancer and cardiac surgeries, and rarely with flu.

Experts say the cases, though exceptions, have underlined the urgent need for

➤ An Alibaug family is staring at a bill of over **Rs 25 lakh** for their daughter's 45-day ICU stay to beat the virus

➤ A man battling influenza H1N1 infection, has run up a bill of over **Rs 50 lakh** more than two months after he was admitted in a Mumbai hospital

➤ H1N1 infection has claimed over 1,000 lives so far this yr



Photo credit: AFP

better influenza prevention, awareness about vaccination and the importance of early hospitalisation. Based on the over 4,300 cases and 450-plus deaths recorded in Maharashtra this season, it has been projected that around 600-1,000 people would need ICU care, ventila-

tor support and advanced management such as an extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) machine, by the end of the year.

The 45-day journey of Alibaug's Priyanka Birje, 25, since being wheeled into the ICU of Bombay Hospital with near non-functional lungs to

complete recovery is an extraordinary one, her physician Gautam Bhansali told **TOL**. "When she didn't respond to ventilator support, the only choice left for us was to strap her to an ECMO machine. She turned around after 24 days," he added. ECMO alone cost the family over Rs 15 lakh out of the total bill.

But the 42-year-old Chembur patient, on ECMO support since June at Jaslok Hospital, continues to be critical. Jaslok's CEO Dr Tarang Gianchandani said, "The cost of treating complications of H1N1 poses a huge financial burden on our patients. On top of that, there is a guarded prognosis or chance of complete recovery, especially in high risk groups."

Experts say that if lakhs get affected with the influenza

in a community, not more than 25% would need hospitalisation. "Less than 5% of those could require critical-care management. But that cost often turns out to be debilitating for a family given that a patient has to be kept in a single room, isolated from the rest. The patient needs constant monitoring, life-saving medicines, ventilator support, etc," said Dr Om Srivastava, an infectious-disease consultant.

In 2015, Dr Atul Kakar from Delhi's Sir Ganga Ram Hospital had carried out one of the first studies on the monetary burden of H1N1 influenza. "The hospital cost is an important reminder for the government to invest in awareness and vaccination drives. A preventive vaccine costs Rs 600-800, and can spare a family a lifetime of hardship," he said.