



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Online Newspaper Clipping Service
Dtd- Wednesday, 27th, February- 2019

Page No.01

How lies and lawyers keep shady colleges in business

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Madhya Pradesh's RKDF Medical College would have been shut down in its first year itself but for the lies and lawyers it employed. Shady medical colleges across the country follow this playbook. In MP alone, four private colleges have been debarred from admissions in the past few years, but not before lengthy litigation.

Every time MCI gives an adverse assessment report based on a college's deficient facilities, the college moves court claiming the inspection was faulty and biased. Courts often order re-inspection and/or allow admissions on the assurance that the deficiencies would be removed.

For example, in November 2016, the Supreme Court-appointed oversight committee (OC) allowed the four MP colleges to enrol students although MCI's inspection teams had repeatedly found glaring deficiencies. The OC gave conditional approval for admissions without physical verification.

Lack of patients is a common problem at private colleges. Many fill up their hospitals with hired "patients" before inspections. Yet, all four colleges got their "essentiality certificates" from the MP government confirming their own and manage 300-bed hospitals, which is the eligibility condition to get 150 seats.

The state also undertook the responsibility to adjust their students in other colleges if "the applicant (college management) fails to create infrastructure for the medical college as per MCI norms and fresh admissions are stopped by the central government." As a result it had to accommodate about 600 students of the deficient

This modus operandi of colleges using fake faculty and patients and then contesting MCI's assessment reports by approaching courts is common in MP and other states, including UP, Karnataka and Kerala



LAW CATCHES UP: RKDF college (above) and Advanced Medical College are among the four MP colleges debarred from admissions in the past few years



colleges in government colleges and other private colleges.

This modus operandi of college managements using fake faculty and patients and then contesting MCI's assessment reports by approaching courts is not unique to MP. Colleges in UP, Karnataka, Telangana, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have employed similar tactics.

In Bhopal, TOI found most private colleges were located well outside the city and depended heavily on empanelment in government schemes to have a barely sufficient number of patients. A former employee of the now closed Advanced Medical College said the hospital used to send buses to nearby villages to get patients.

Last August, Mahavir Institute of Medical Sciences in Telangana was pulled up by the SC for "the fraud played by the college in projecting healthy persons as patients in their hospital for the purpose of showing compliance of minimum standards."

While granting relief to private colleges, courts have sometimes questioned MCI's rationale for being le-

nient towards government medical colleges that lack infrastructure. The difference, MCI says, is mainly the availability of patients.

Responding in a case filed by the students of two closed private medical colleges in MP — Advanced Medical College, Bhopal, and Modern Medical College, Indore — MCI said, "In private medical colleges... the clinical material is not as abundant as that in the government medical colleges... The government medical colleges... have abundant clinical material/inflow of patients, which is the most crucial aspect of the teaching and training of medical students."

While private colleges can simply shut shop leaving students in the lurch, government colleges can't and don't.

This med college produces docs but has few patients

Patient Care Is Most Crucial Aspect Of Medical Training, RKDF Rigged MCI Inspections With Fake Patients

Rema Nagarajan &
P Naveen | TNN

For four years, Medical Council of India (MCI) repeatedly flagged concerns about a private college in Madhya Pradesh but could not stop it from taking in three batches of students. One batch of 150 doctors is now in its final year of MBBS while another just appeared for second-year exams.

The story of RKDF Medical College, which finally faced a Supreme Court crack-down in January, shows how blatantly such colleges exploit the legal process to stay in business.

MCI and a Supreme Court-appointed inspection committee had noted "fictitious" patients in the teaching hospital, falsified medical records and "grossly inadequate" patient load. Although the SC has ordered

or students were around, Dr Kushwaha claimed patients mostly visited the hospital after 4.30pm. However, on a repeat visit the same evening, he admitted there were no patients, hence no point in repeating a tour of the hospital.

An employee who played guide said the college has three "public relations officers" who bus in 'patients' from nearby villages before inspections. Dr Kushwaha said they had separate funds to get "clinical material" (read patients) for students.

Incidentally, Dr Kushwaha was Madhya Pradesh's director of medical education from January 2014 to the time he joined RKDF college as dean immediately after his retirement in 2015.

Asked why teaching is allowed to continue at a college the SC had found to have "indulged in large-scale malpractices" to comply with the minimum standards for admitting students, officials in the MP Directorate of Medical Education said it was up to Medical Council of India or the courts to shut it down.

"The students studying there have not complained or gone to court. How can we take any action?" said an official while agreeing that students pass-

that the third batch admitted in 2017-18 be shifted to other private colleges in MP, the 2014-15 and 2016-17 batches remain at RKDF college. It's anyone's guess just how many real patients these soon-to-be doctors have seen.

It was business as usual at the college when TOI visited it around 11.30am on January 30. The dean, Dr S S Kushwaha, offered a tour of the college and hospital to show it had enough patients and required facilities. He also suggested a visit to the hostels to talk to students. However, TOI found an empty hospital with wards locked up, defunct operation theatres, no patients in the post-operative ward or anywhere else, barring a handful in the OPD area. The OPD rooms had no doctors, and the blood bank was deserted too.

The hostel visit didn't materialise, ostensibly because students had left after the exams. When told no patients

ing out as doctors without treating genuine patients and getting proper training was a concern.

RKDF college is shown on the MCI website as affiliated to the state-run Barkatullah University, though Kushwaha said they were not affiliated anymore. Asked if their affiliation had been withdrawn after the SC order, he said that was not possible as they are affiliated to Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan University, a private university owned by the RKDF Group, which runs a veritable education empire in Madhya Pradesh, including colleges of nursing, pharmacy, dental science, homoeopathy and Ayurveda.

What that suggests is for the RKDF Group, and Dr Kushwaha, the crores in SC-imposed fines or being labelled by the apex court as a fraudulent institution is no more than a pause. The business of education rolls on without any full stops.



