



MBBS marks don't count in NEET era: RGUHS VC

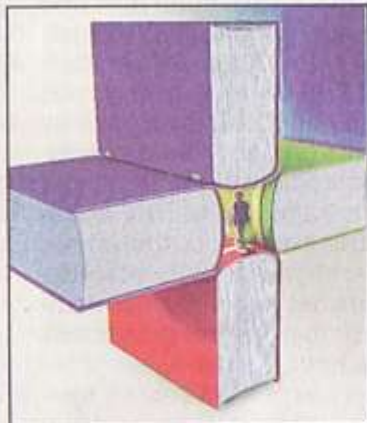
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Bengaluru: It's close to four years since the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for Postgraduate Courses (NEET PG) was introduced, which is now the only gateway for pursuing higher education in medicine.

As the percentile score in NEET PG exam is the only criterion to enrol for MD courses, marks secured in MBBS course have no value any more, according to Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS) authorities.

"What a student scores in MBBS is immaterial now. There is no difference between a just-pass student and a merit one in MBBS in the current era," rued RGUHS vice-chancellor S Sacchidananda.

Observing that students' focus is now more on doing well in NEET PG, he felt they must not ignore gaining clinical knowledge and diagnosis



expertise during MBBS.

Prior to 2016, when the state-level CET PG was conducted for choosing candidates for higher education in medicine, 50% weightage was given to their MBBS score while allotting ranks.

Some medical students get into coaching classes right from the second/third year of MBBS. "It's not easy to write NEET PG without coaching. And after MBBS, we can't afford to spend a year preparing.

No clarity on 'NEXT'

The much-debated National Exit Test (NEXT) — likely to become the only pathway for higher education in medicine in future — is also not fool-proof, according to RGUHS authorities. "Even as NEXT may be the centralised exam, practical test will be conducted in individual colleges in the final year,

testing the knowledge of upcoming doctors. But if marks in practical exams are allotted in individual colleges, the standard may vary from one institution to another. Karnataka colleges may grant not more than 45/50 for students, and a state like Rajasthan may award 50/50 with liberal evaluation. It can lead to disparity," said RGUHS sources.

Hence, the focus on NEET PG right from early MBBS days. The way we prepare for MBBS theory exam is different from the way we work for NEET. The resource material and textbooks are different, as is the approach," said a house surgeon in Victoria Hospital.

For a foundation course of 50-60 classes, spread over two years, medicos are shelling out Rs 80,000 to Rs 1 lakh at NEET PG coaching centres. "There are some online courses too,

for which many students get enrolled. Peer pressure, stress and extreme competition are forcing over 80% students to enrol for external coaching for NEET PG," said a student in his second-year MBBS.

According to senior faculty in RGUHS, the trend is affecting the clinical acumen of upcoming doctors. "The stress to land a PG seat is making them take MBBS classes lightly. Medical students shouldn't become marks-scoring

machines. While some from the creamy layer may be able to give justice to both, it won't happen for all, and this could affect future healthcare," said a senior professor.

S Kumar, chancellor, Sri Devaraj Urs Academy of Higher Education and Research, Kolar, a deemed-to-be-university, said the shift of focus from MBBS to NEET PG has led to a deficit in internship training. He blamed the quality of teaching for failure to retain the attention of students.

'Not a criterion for jobs'

"MBBS marks are no criterion for employment as well. Multispecialty/corporate hospitals take MD and MS graduates. In government recruitment, the criterion for students is to clear MBBS, and not the marks they score. If such riders are put in government walk-in interviews, willing candidates also may not apply," Kumar said.