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1.7k cardiologists lose specialist tag after MCI order

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Bengaluru: Cardiac care has taken a hit across India with the ranks of cardiologists having shrunk. In all, 1,706 clinical cardiologists lost their specialist tag following Medical Council of India's recent decision not to grant approval for post-graduate diploma in clinical cardiology course they had completed between 2006-13 from Indira Gandhi National Open University.

Close to 350 doctors from Karnataka graduated with PGDCC and 120 of them are working in the state.

"The objective of this course was to train physicians working in semi-urban areas in community cardiology to diagnose and prevent cardiac ailments. It was not meant to compete with medical colleges. The irony is that MCI is objecting to a course started by the Union health ministry. There is certainly some wisdom lacking here," noted car-

HEARTCARE MATTERS

- Indians are said to be genetically three times more vulnerable to heart attacks than Europeans

- 36% of deaths in the country are attributed to heart attacks



- There are 4,000 cardiologists in the country, including clinical cardiologists whose qualification now is only MBBS, say officials

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Dr Devi Shetty | CARDIOLOGIST

diologist Dr Devi Shetty said.

"Most cardiologists live in cities and the worst affected will be patients in non-urban set-ups. In fact, the situation now is the same as that of 2006 when the course started," said Dr Shetty, who was among those who had designed the PGDCC curriculum.

Dr Ravi Shankar HP, who works in Chamarajanagar government hospital and is a PGDCC holder, said, "I am proud to have saved many lives by diagnosing heart ailments among patients coming to government hospitals. I have been trained in clinical cardiology for two years from Narayana Hrudayalaya."

Incidentally, the two-year PGDCC course was not a distance-education programme, but a post-graduation course conducted after an all-India entrance exam in 77 hospitals with separate cardiology departments. In Karnataka, seven hospitals in Bengaluru and one each in Mysuru and Mangaluru offered this course.

MCI's major objection was that the training programme wasn't evaluated within one year of the course in accordance with the

Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 rules. Ignou hadn't obtained MCI's nod before starting the course.

The course was stopped in 2013 and the last batch graduated in 2015. No fresh admissions were made in 2014 and 2015. Disappointed doctors approached the Delhi high court, which in September 2019 asked the Union health ministry to take a decision in the matter. The court also directed MCI to consider Ignou's application for grant of recognition to PGDCC.

However, MCI's board of governors concluded that those doctors cannot be allowed to work as cardiologists.

Top cardiologists, including Dr Shetty, have written to the Union health minister to recognise PGDCC. The Indian Association of Clinical Cardiologists has also raised the matter with the Centre.

IACC chairman Dr Rajesh Rajan said, "Due to non-recognition of the course, we are facing disrespect in society, to the extent of being labelled as 'quacks'. In some states like Kerala, the government has appointed PGDCC doctors in taluk and district hospitals as clinical cardiologists."