

Standing Committee Report Summary

Quality of Medical Education in India

- The Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare (Chair: Mr. Bhubaneswar Kalita) submitted its report on the ‘Quality of Medical Education in India’, on February 9, 2024. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
- **Limited seats:** The Committee observed a significant gap between medical aspirants and availability of seats. At the undergraduate (UG) level, it observed that close to one lakh MBBS seats were available for over 11 lakh students who cleared the National Eligibility-cum Entrance Test (NEET) in 2023-24. At the post-graduate (PG) level, around 68,000 seats were available for over two lakh aspirants. To ensure greater availability of seats, the Committee recommended: (i) continuing the initiative to establish medical colleges attached to district or referral hospitals, (ii) offering online and distance learning to increase student intake without overburdening physical infrastructure, and (iii) encouraging private investment in medical education.
- Guidelines on undergraduate medical education limit the annual intake capacity of new medical colleges to 50-150 seats. The Committee recommended permitting colleges to increase undergraduate seats upto 250.
- **Uneven distribution of medical colleges:** The Committee observed a vast imbalance in the distribution of medical colleges across states. It observed that Bihar-Maharashtra, and Rajasthan-Tamil Nadu are almost equally populated, yet have vastly different availability of medical colleges. Existing guidelines stipulate minimum bed capacities for teaching hospitals, depending upon their academic intake. An average bed occupancy rate of 80% is also mandated. The Committee recommended revising such uniform criteria and to formulate region-specific guidelines and norms.
- **Curriculum:** The Committee noted that the new UG curriculum seeks to impart holistic education by introducing: (i) early exposure to clinical practice, (ii) training in ethics and communication, and (iii) self-directed and problem-based learning. The Committee observed that while these regulations are comprehensive, it may be a challenge for medical colleges with limited resources to implement them. The Committee recommended that the guidelines be made flexible enough to be implemented in different settings. The Committee highlighted the need to standardise the quality of medical education in India. It recommended that reputed medical institutes from various zone in the country can mentor other medical colleges in their zone. Mentoring will involve monitoring the standard of education and classes in new medical colleges.
- **Cost of medical education:** The Committee observed that cost of medical education in India ranged from Rs 60 lakh to one crore rupees, and has increased over time. It recommended measures such as providing needs-based scholarships to students and tax concessions to organisations running medical colleges. To reduce functioning costs, the Committee recommended collaboration between private medical colleges and district hospitals. It also recommended subsidising laboratory equipment or machines in private medical colleges.
- **Shortage of Qualified Faculty:** The Committee observed vacancies in medical colleges across the country. It also noted that faculty did not meet minimum attendance requirements. To ensure attendance, the Committee recommended regular inspection of medical colleges and introducing systems where students can report low attendance or ghost faculty. To improve quality, the Committee recommended the National Medical Commission to focus on upskilling teachers by introducing relevant programmes and establishing a dedicated national institute for their training.
- **Medical Research:** The Committee observed that India’s expenditure on health research spending is around 0.02% of the GDP. The US and UK spend 0.65% and 0.44% of their GDP, respectively, on health research. The Committee recommended delineating priority areas of research and to encourage colleges to undertake research. The Committee also recommended the priority research undertaken by colleges to be partly funded by government agencies.

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