

Transforming pharmacy education in developing countries: Is needs-based education the way forward?

I, on the behalf of the editorial board, am pleased to see an overwhelming global interest for this special issue on Pharmacy Education. The journal received a wide range and number of contributions for the special issue, especially from developing countries, suggesting research into pharmacy education is gaining popularity in these countries as well. Archives of Pharmacy Practice will continue to encourage and publish high quality pharmacy education research in usual future issues as well.

In the past few decades, the focus of the pharmacy profession has shifted from the dispensing of medicines to direct patient care prompting changes in the structure and delivery of undergraduate pharmacy curricula across the globe. This shift which was initiated in developed countries has now spread to the developing countries and the curricula in these countries have become more clinical-oriented.^[1] However, the shift toward clinical curricula in developing countries has received criticism as the changes are deemed “cosmetic only” and do not reflect the local societal needs.^[2-5] Pharmacy schools/colleges should be very careful while reviewing and changing their curricula as such changes should be “needs-based,”^[6-8] after assessing the local current needs and future demands of the profession. Changes in the curricula should not be solely based on the changes in the roles of pharmacists internationally. Academic institutes may learn from international experiences, but a deep thought should

be given to applicability of a particular innovation in the local context. Importantly, current and future job market for the graduates, availability of human and financial resources, and necessary infrastructure to deliver clinical-oriented curricula should be taken into consideration as well. A clinical-oriented pharmacy program without appropriately trained and skilled human resource is bound to receive criticism and unlikely to produce competent graduates who can make any significant impact on patient care. In addition, views and opinions of all the stakeholders should be taken into account while preparing and implementing the new curriculum. Unless all of the above-mentioned concerns are judiciously addressed, the changes in curricula will not be able to achieve its desired objectives. In fact, there is a danger that the pharmacists graduating from such superficial clinical programs may become a burden on the healthcare systems and society. In the present era, where the landscape of pharmacy education and practice is changing rapidly, there is more than ever need to emphasize the importance of needs-based education in designing the new curricula. Only then, the pharmacy profession will have a sustainable and prosperous future.

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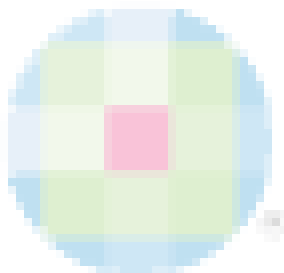
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