

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Didactic and Certified Trauma and Acute Care Surgery Fellowship is Inevitable Demand of Pakistan

Dear Editor!

Discussions about the content and competencies of any postgraduate training program mainly focus on what the graduates need in long run after completion of training¹. However, from the prospect of any progressive country, a post-graduate training program should also liaise with the demands of the country. Over the past decade, the acute care surgery practice paradigm has become a defined entity in the developed world and didactic fellowship training programs in trauma and acute surgery have been implemented. In recent years, the American Association for Surgery has matured to 20 different disciplines of trauma and acute care².

Pakistan is ranked among those low to middle-income countries where the burden of surgical conditions and diseases is increasing. Pakistan suffers an annual deficit of 17 million surgeries and the majority of them involve acute surgical conditions³. Trauma due to road traffic accidents and injuries secondary to criminal and terrorist attacks impose great demand for surgical needs. Trauma is one of the leading causes of disability-adjusted life years, affecting especially young bread earners of low-income families in Pakistan. In 2013, an estimated 118,558 deaths occurred in Pakistan due to injuries, of which 22.7% were RTIs, 10.3% falls, and 10.3% interpersonal violence^{4,5}. Besides cost and easy accessibility to surgical care, a lack of trained surgical specialists is one of the main contributors to high mortality in patients with traumatic injuries. Hence in the field of advanced care of complex trauma and acute care surgery patients, there is an emerging need for focused education and training programs in Pakistan.

The CPSP is the main certifying body for post-graduate medical education in Pakistan. Among 73 specialties that currently CPSP offers, 23 are specifically designated to various disciplines of surgery⁶. Out

of these 23 surgical specialties, 7 super-specialties can only be chosen after the accomplishment of the degree of FCPS in the required discipline. However, currently, there is no dedicated certified fellowship in trauma and acute care surgery in the country. The majority of traumatic injuries are dealt with in isolation by different surgical specialties and residents mostly learn the art of dealing with traumatic injuries on an opportunistic basis. Currently, Aga Khan University hospital offers only 1 post for 2 years in General Surgery and Trauma fellowship. Due to a lack of fellowship programs in trauma, acute care surgery and critical care most of the country's graduating residents seek such fellowships abroad. Despite the fact that efforts are being made at individual institution levels like the formation of a center of excellence of trauma under the platform of Aga Khan university and state of art Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Accident Emergency & Trauma Centre, there is a dire need for didactic and certified trauma fellowship programs in Pakistan. Such fellowships will not only raise standards of training and research in trauma and acute care surgery but will also bridge the gaps in lieu of a national necessity.

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