
WE, FORENSIC MEDICINE AND THE MEDICAL COUNCIL OF INDIA
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Forensic Medicine is a branch of science that deals with the application of medical knowledge towards administration of justice. It is a fraternity so closely related to common man and its immense importance in judiciary and crime investigation cannot be denied off. The field has grown giants and leaps in the western world and some other countries where the human rights laws are stringent and utmost importance is given to conviction of the criminals and protection of innocents. But in this part of world due to lack of financial provisions, political will and host of other factors the field has failed to flourish. Still with the availability of basic infrastructure, we the forensic people have kept consistently working, assisting the judiciary with a hope that one day the outlook of the higher authorities towards forensic medicine will change and the subject will see the light of dawn.

But as it is rightly said being introspective never helps unless we fight for our rights. Taking undue advantage of our self contained attitude towards the growth of subject, the MCI had issued certain notifications last year. These notifications had created turbulence in the hearts of forensic experts. The decision was strongly condemned by the forensic experts across India. Here is a short overview of the MCI notification and the efforts taken to save forensic field from the wrath of MCI.

On September 17, 2010 MCI ad hoc body, the Board of Governors (BOGs) comprising of seven temporarily appointed members published a notification of amendment in minimum teaching staff requirement of various subjects in undergraduate medical curriculum. According to this curriculum the minimum teaching staff requirements in forensic medicine were drastically reduced. On reducing the minimum staff requirements in Forensic Medicine all the medicolegal work along with post mortem procedures will suffer. This will definitely affect the proper impartment of justice and ultimately common man would be the sufferer. This notification had attracted lot criticism from forensic medicine doctors all over India. We at Indira Gandhi Government Medical College, Nagpur decided to fight against MCI for this injustice done to our field. We made several correspondences with the Board of Governors, MCI. We got various associations involved in this correspondence like the Maharashtra State Medical Teachers Association (MSMTA), Maharashtra Association of Resident Doctors (MARD) and UG Medical Students Association etc. Applications under the RTI act were sent to MCI. On receiving irrelevant answers from the Appellate authority of MCI, we complained the matter to Mr. Shailesh Gandhi, The Chief Information Commissioner of India (CIC). The CIC rapped MCI for providing false details and asked them to answer our queries within four weeks. We do received MCI answers to our queries. These documents proved useful in the court to strengthen our stand. We urged faculties from other medical colleges to do the same. In spite of all these efforts the Board of Governors did not mend to it.

Meanwhile in December 2010 another bombshell came from the BOGs about the VISION 2015. This Vision 2015 was proposed to revamp the UG medical education in India. As per this proposal Forensic Medicine was made elective for the under graduate medical curriculum. This proposal would have definitely pushed Forensic Medicine into dark ages. A lot of cry and hue was created against this proposal amongst the forensic experts across India. Most of us were talking about legal remedies. Even the four hour marathon discussion to decide the action plan at the IAFM Conference 2011, Nellore went inconclusive. Some of our esteemed

faculty members were so enthusiastic about it that they were ready to go to the courts on their own. But alas no one came forward and actually made a move to drag the BOGs to the courts.

Lack of any progress regarding the issue made us restless. We conducted a series of meetings of the faculties in FMT from different colleges across Vidarbha at IGGMC, Nagpur. We also discussed the issue with the Indian Medical Association, Nagpur Branch. We created media awareness regarding the issues by conducting a series of articles in the local and National news papers (Times of India etc). The opinions in these articles were taken from various eminent forensic experts across Maharashtra, Advocates and police officials. We enthusiastically participated in the BLACK DAY observed across India against the policies of MCI.

A meeting was organized at Dept of FMT, IGGMC Nagpur on 26 January 2011 under guidance of Dr. Pradip G. Dixit, Professor and Head, Dept of FMT, GMC Nagpur and Dr. Manish B. Shrigiriwar, Professor and Head, Dept of FMT, SVNGMC, Yavatmal. The faculty members from medical colleges in Vidarbha were present for the meeting. It was unanimously decided in the meeting to file a petition at the Bombay High Court, Nagpur Bench. We decided to fight against MCI on two fronts - staff reduction and Vision 2015. The issue was discussed with two eminent Supreme Court lawyers from Nagpur. After thorough discussion with the lawyers we decided to file two Public Interest Litigations (one for staff reduction and another for Vision 2015) against MCI at the Bombay High Court, Nagpur Bench with petitioners as postgraduate students of GMC and IGGMC, Nagpur. Then the petition was finalised with the subsequent two or three meetings with the lawyers.

On 22/02/11 Indian Medical Association, Nagpur along with Maharashtra State Medical Teachers Association (MSMTA) and Maharashtra Association of Resident Doctors (MARD) [MARD, GMC and MARD, IGGMC Nagpur] organised agitation against various policies of MCI which are detrimental to medical education at large. Staff reduction and VISION 2015 were among the main issues for agitation.

The PIL against Minimum teaching staff requirements in Forensic Medicine was filed at Bombay High Court, Nagpur Bench on 28 February 2011. The Union of India, Government of Maharashtra and the Medical Council of India were the respondents in this PIL. It got approved as a PIL on 18 March 2011. The matter is subjudice now and has completed four hearings since then. Notices have been issued to all respondents and except for Government of Maharashtra the respondents have replied to the court. Maharashtra Government is expected to file its reply soon.

Our PIL regarding the VISION 2015 was filed at the Bombay High Court, Nagpur Bench on 25th March 2011. The respondents were the same as mentioned above. It took as many as 33 days to get the petition approved by the Committee of Judges and it got admitted as a PIL on 27th April 2011. Meanwhile summer vacations for high courts started. The courts reopened on 06/06/11. Finally the PIL was heard by the Bench on 20/06/11, (82 DAYS AFTER FILING) and the notices were issued. Three hearings were completed. The MCI denied any such proposal of making forensic medicine elective for UG medical students. They also made it clear that they will be implementing the forensic medicine syllabus prepared some of most eminent forensic experts in our country. The PIL was withdrawn on 17 August 2011 with liberty to file a fresh petition if occasion arises.

We have received a lot of support from the forensic experts across India in this movement. In a way we have tried our best to save our forensic field and will continue to do so in future.