

EDITORIAL

Brain Drain in Health Sector in Pakistan. A high priority concern

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Brain drain means migration of educated and skilled individuals to other countries for better income and or living conditions [1]. According to the constitution of Pakistan act 8 every citizen has the right to migrate to any country in the world for life security [2]. Everyone has the right to look for greener pastures. The phenomenal rise in exodus of human resource in 2022 is alarming. It continues at a rapid pace This needs analytical evaluation of reason for such a huge movement and remedial counter measures need to be identified. Pakistan is a low-income group country the migrating population comprises of graduates, skilled workers, and labourers, young between 25years and 35 years of age looking for better incomes, job securities, and social justice. According to the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) 832,339 Pakistanis went abroad. This is the highest number recorded since 2016 [3]. Migration abroad was a leak in the past, has now become a rupture. It should be a high priority concern for the policy makers.

Let us have closer look at the factors leading to this loss of educated and skilled human resources within the context of health professions lit. Evidence-based literature is replete with articles on this issue. According to a cross-sectional study by Nadir and colleagues one in three Pakistani medical graduates aspires to relocate to high income group countries on account of fragile native socio-medical infrastructure [4]. Major causes leading to this efflux are fragmented postgraduate training, peer pressure, better job opportunities and income abroad, , long working hours with no overtime payments, hostile media stress on the system, favoritism, gross deviation from meritocracy, inefficient government policies, workplace harassment, uncertain career growth and hurdles in travelling to and lodging at workplace [5,6,7]. Majority of doctors especially fresh graduates relocate to USA, UK, Saudi Arabia Australia, and Gulf countries [8].

Migration of doctors from Pakistan has profound impact on its healthcare infrastructure specially in rural areas [9]. This leads to fewer general practitioners for primary healthcare, lessor number of specialists, deficient doctors in basic health units and overall poor performance of healthcare system This deficiency indirectly leads to higher healthcare costs. Another significant effect is on research and innovation in the country health sector From January 2000 to December 2022, the number of articles published in the web of science-indexed journals worldwide was 248,457. As per the Web of Science 2022 report, the rising trend decreased in the year 2022. The most potential reasons for decreasing research productivity may be the political instability and brain drain from Pakistan [10].

A very crucial point which needs consideration and research is, are we producing more health professionals than what we need? Is there a disproportionate equation of supply and demand, especially in the background of mushroom, unregulated growth of medical colleges both in public and private sectors. Do we have more medical graduates than available vacancies for the young doctors? Another ancillary point is open merit policy in medical colleges. Many lady doctors drop out from the medical schools and the later from the active pursuit of the career, this indirectly adds to dearth of doctors and migration of male doctors.

The government of Pakistan must establish sustainable policies to minimize the brain drain and recuperate the prosperity of their academic institutes and healthcare system. Some of plausible sustainable measures would be more strict regulations for undergraduate and postgraduate institutes to revisit curriculum, pay rise, provision of safe and comfortable work environment, create job banks, promote entrepreneurship encourage research and innovation through incentives, reconsider open merit policy for admissions in medical colleges. Last but

not the least build database on the issue at hand so that statistically driven analysis can be made for future directions.

Brain drain is not merely a statistic. It is a symptom of deeper structural decay. And unless we confront it, on priority with urgency and clarity, the cost will be borne by every citizen who finds themselves in a hospital without a trustable doctor, a clinic without a specialist, or a community without accomplished consultants.

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