

FALLING STANDARDS OF MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS

It is a common remark amongst teachers that the medical examinations have become a farce. It is stated that widespread and open cheating occurs in the exams and because of political pressures and open physical threats, the teachers and examination invigilators have been completely paralysed. It is also claimed that the results announced by the examining bodies are different (i.e., a higher pass percentage) than those that the examiners have assessed. Those students who still manage to fail pass in the many supplementary and special supplementary examinations. The teachers also claim that they are freely approached by influential people including their seniors and superiors to pass certain students. In short, the system of examinations has become a joke.

The purpose of learning and teaching is obviously not to prepare the student for exams but to modify behaviour by education. The only purpose of the examination is to make certain that this has been achieved to a satisfactory degree. Also, exams are a feedback to the teachers and the system to see how well they have achieved their target. Therefore, given a group of intelligent and motivated students, the exams are really a test of the system and the teachers and not the students! In short, exams are not at all what they have become—an end in themselves!

What is the way out of this rut? There is no simple solution. There is however a bold step that may work i.e., abolish the examination as it exists today! Instead, let there be weekly tutorial submission and weekly quiz on the small quantum taught that week. There could even be a semester examination at the end of each 3 or 4 months. This doing away with exams will suddenly deflate the giant disproportion that the exams have assumed. With small frequent tests (even open book tests) the student will be forced to do little bits of work and he cannot help but learn. This will of course mean a lot more work for the teachers. Can our teachers pass this test?

EDITOR