

LETTERS

In Reply to: Unstandardized and Defective Evaluation Practices in the Examination System in Pharmacy Institutes of Pakistan

To the Editor. We read the article “Unstandardized and Defective Evaluation Practices in the Examination System in Pharmacy Institutes of Pakistan.”¹ After reading its critical analysis, we would like to describe the actual problems.

An ideal examination system provides a true image of competencies of professionals and improves teaching methodologies. The examination system that is ideal and standard for specific kinds of educational setup might not be ideal or be substandard for another. Therefore, a single examination system cannot be implemented in every country. Some countries are in the developing phase and preparing to adopt standard practices but face obstacles such as limited facilities and resources. A successful evaluation system can fail badly in different scenarios. Before the true implementation of any evaluation system, it must be indigenized according to the resources and facilities available. This indigenization may alter some part of an ideal or standard examination system to incorporate it within a specific country on the basis of logical reasons.

Khalid¹ encircled the only defects in evaluation practices. In a true sense, these are not defects but premature criticism. Pakistan is one of the countries that is adopting the semester system to improve its existing system. In Pakistan, the semester system is not only going to be incorporated gradually in all pharmacy institutes, but also in all other Pakistani institutes. Due to this fact, there is non-uniformity of the examination system because some institutes have adopted the semester system and some are still running an annual examination system.

On the other hand, we cannot neglect the fact that the annual examination system is not a defective system. Every system has its own merits and demerits and no perfect evaluation system exists.

In an annual examination system, internal examiners deliver lectures during the session within course contents approved by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan and an external examiner is directed to evaluate within these contents. The annual system uses fictitious roll numbers on answer sheets for students, which completely eliminates the chance of bias among examiners, which is one of the evident flaws in the semester system. Pakistani Institutes are not reluctant to adopt the semester system, but 100% implementation will definitely take time.

The information on the suicide attempts by students as a result of the unstandardized examination system¹ was based on only one newspaper report. Similar cases of suicide resulting from examination fears have been reported in other developing countries.² Examination fear among students is not specifically a fault of the annual examination system but it an element of test-taking that is always there to a varying degree in any type of assessment.

Pakistani pharmacy professionals as well as other health professionals are performing a significant role within the country as well as working side by side with pharmacy professionals of developed countries. The Pakistani professionals are demonstrating clear evidence of an effective examination system in Pakistan.

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