

LETTER TO EDITOR

Medical Brain Drain – An Increasing Social Stigma

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To,
The editor,

Migration of talented and educated professionals from their native country, in search of higher salaries, advanced technology, stable political conditions, and a better living, defines the term brain drain. This is not only concerned with people but is also concerned with migration of education, intellect, talent and resources as well. Currently in our country, brain drain of doctors is a rising social stigma as Pakistan ranks as 3rd leading country for International Medical Graduates working abroad.¹The reason may be financial, social stressors, job satisfaction and better learning opportunities but this mobility is very asymmetrical. The immigrants are usually from developing nations to countries like USA, UK, Canada, Australia which are marked 1st world and beneficiaries of large scale physician immigration over last fifty years.²

These professional émigrés are competent, profound and skilled people, who are moreover an asset to that society, their contributions at home would have been valuable to their health care and socioeconomic sectors. Further, they could be role models and a source of great academic inspiration. It is of great interest that the recipient countries and the migrants are not at loss, in fact the donor country is decreasing doctor-patient ratio and in short loss of resources and human capital there.³Although at some point there are remittances that immigrant physicians be sent home, however the stated disadvantages are not compensated by the clinical and educational link they establish or their economical support.

Pakistan has a greater burden of diseases and increasing mortality, with a growing disease load of cancers, cardio vascular diseases, disabilities and an increasing rate of infectious diseases and nutritional deficiencies.⁴It is indeed a socioeconomic need to identify the reasons

which push towards efflux of the talented young graduates or trained professionals to the other countries at national level. Disparities in working conditions and demotivating factors should be resolved. The young graduates and students should be given some incentives, leadership and better chances to progress. The government should design policies, introduce teaching research programs and take responsibility to train, retain and sustain its youthful and important work force. Many countries intensify their efforts to attract and retain foreign students, which increases the risk of brain drain in the developing countries. In poor countries, this transfer can change the skill structure of the labor force, cause labor shortages, and affect fiscal policy. It can be a boon or a curse for developing countries.⁵Finding opportunities and seeking better choices is a basic human right. But a promising future with good learning and work environment, improvised salaries, optimism, peace and equity can certainly help to reduce and control the social malaise of the medical brain drain.

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