



Perception of Postgraduates towards District Residency Program: A Mixed Method Study

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ABSTRACT:

Background: All medical students pursuing post-graduation in broad specialities should mandatorily be posted in district health centres for three months during the period of their training as per the National Medical Commission. Though the provision of District Residency Programme was made in 2020, it could not be implemented owing to prevailing pandemic conditions. Since it is implemented for the first time in 2023 in post graduate training, it is imperative to assess the perception and personal experience of post graduate students who have completed this 3-month long training.

Material and methods: This study consisted of a questionnaire consisting of closed ended and open-ended questions which was prepared and validated by senior resource faculties of department of Medical Education of a private medical college. The responses to closed-ended questions were analysed using descriptive statistics. The responses to open-ended questions from postgraduate students regarding DRP were quantified from the contents. Descriptive categories were then framed from the contents.

Results: Most of the residents (64.7%) disapproved the fact that DRP is relevant to post-graduate curriculum. Since it was implemented for the first time, majority of the residents (69.6%) find it difficult to accept it in the already vast and challenging post-graduate curriculum. 43.1% postgraduate students recommended that proper accommodation and food facilities should be provided during DRP posting.

Conclusion: The district residents seemed to be quite dissatisfied with the basic amenities which were provided and the learning environment. The study highlighted the crucial role of a District Residency Programme Coordinator (DRPC) who will serve as a connecting link between the district residents and the state government authorities for the successful implementation of DRP.

Introduction

District Residency Programme (DRP) has been recently introduced by the regulatory body of medical education in India, the National Medical Commission (NMC), for medical postgraduate students admitted in government as well as private medical colleges and deemed universities in 2021 and onwards. As per this program, all medical students pursuing post-graduation

in broad specialities should mandatorily be posted in district health centres for three months during the period of their training.¹ The rotation of postgraduate students will be done in third, fourth or fifth semester of the postgraduate program. Though the provision of District Residency Programme was made in 2020, it could not be implemented at that time owing to prevailing COVID pandemic.



The National Medical Commission has clarified that accommodation facilities must be provided to postgraduate students either within the campus of district Hospital or within 2-3 kilometre by the concerned State authorities. However, it has been postulated in one study that the District Residency Programme for medical postgraduates is an ambitious initiative of National Medical Commission.² This 3-month long program may sound useful for postgraduates posted in department of Medicine, but for students pursuing postgraduation in branches other than Medicine, the tenure of postgraduation is in itself quite challenging to learn the required skills.

Though the strength of this program lies in the fact that its primary objective is to ensure that the postgraduate students acquire the requisite knowledge, attitude, and skills at community level, it has certain limitations too. This is because the first batch of DRP commenced at a time when the schedule of admission and examinations of medical students was disturbed due to pandemic conditions and most of the final year students were either preparing for their exams or have graduated thus leading to increased workload on fresh batch of postgraduate students.

There is paucity of data on perception of postgraduate students towards District Residency Programme. Since it is implemented for the first time in post graduate training, it is imperative to assess the perception of post graduate students who have completed this 3-month long training. The data thus obtained will help the various stakeholders to gauge the success of this program and in making necessary modifications, if required. Thus, the present study has been planned with the aim to assess the perception and personal experience of post graduate students who have completed 3-month training under District Residency Programme.

Materials and Methods

The study was commenced after obtaining approval from the Institutional Ethics Committee, MGMCH, Jaipur. Since the study involves perception and personal experience of post graduate students, a questionnaire consisting of closed ended and open-ended questions was prepared and validated by senior resource faculties of department of Medical Education of a private medical college. The participants were explained about the entire study procedure and an informed consent was obtained.

About 100 post graduate students admitted in the year 2021 and onwards pursuing training in broad specialities were included in the study. A pre-validated anonymous questionnaire was prepared and circulated among post graduate students through google forms.

The collected data was entered in Microsoft Excel worksheet. Descriptive statistics was applied to analyse the quantitative data while the qualitative data was analysed using appropriate statistical tests. The responses to open-ended questions from postgraduate students regarding DRP were quantified from the contents. Descriptive categories were then framed from the contents.

Results

Out of total 132 post graduate students posted under DRP, 102 residents participated in the study and submitted their responses to the questionnaire pertaining to perception and personal experience of DRP. All the students (100%) agreed that they were aware of the District Residency Program in PG curriculum. Out of 102 students, 74 (72.5%) students have completed their District Residency Program while 32 (27.5%) students were still undergoing DRP as depicted in Figure 1.

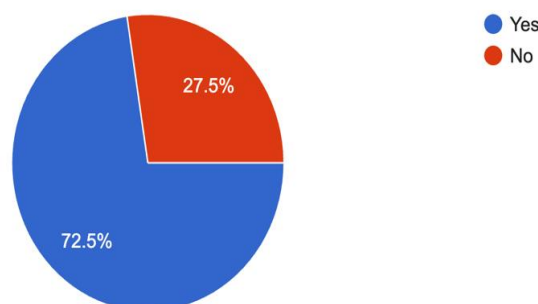


Figure 1: Percentage of post graduate students who have completed DRP posting.

Most of the students who have completed their posting stayed there for more than 80 days while the remaining students are still there for completion of their posting.

89 (87.3 %) students managed their accommodation on their own and only 13 (12.7%) students used the



accommodation provided by State Government

authorities as depicted in Figure 2.

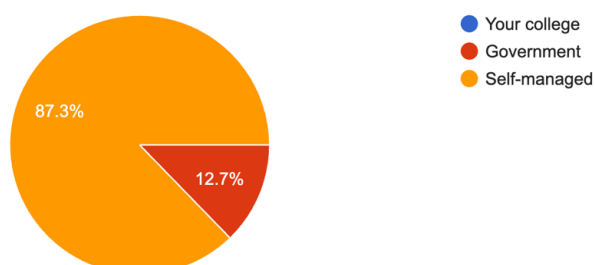


Figure 2: Percentage of post-graduates using accommodation facilities during DRP

Out of them, 90.2% students were not satisfied with the accommodation facilities while 71.6% students rated the accommodation facilities as very poor, and 15.2% students rated as below average. The internet facilities which were provided during DRP were rated as very poor by 75.5% respondents while food and hygiene were also given very poor ratings

by 75.5% and 78.4% students respectively. The learning environment during DRP was rated as very poor by 58.8% students while 15.7% students rated it as below average.

Majority (64.7%) of students disagreed with the relevance of the programme while only 17.6% of the respondents agreed with relevance of the programme as depicted in Figure 3.

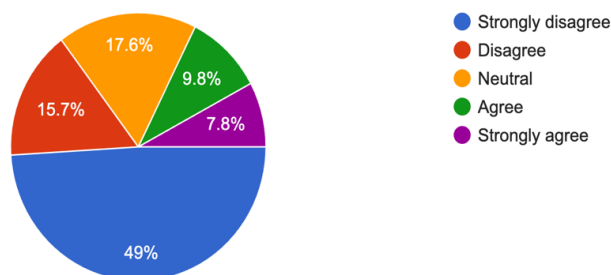


Figure 3: Percentage of residents who perceived DRP relevant to PG curriculum.

Most of the students (55.9%) disagreed and only 10.8

% students agreed that DRP is a good initiative for postgraduate students as shown in Figure 4.

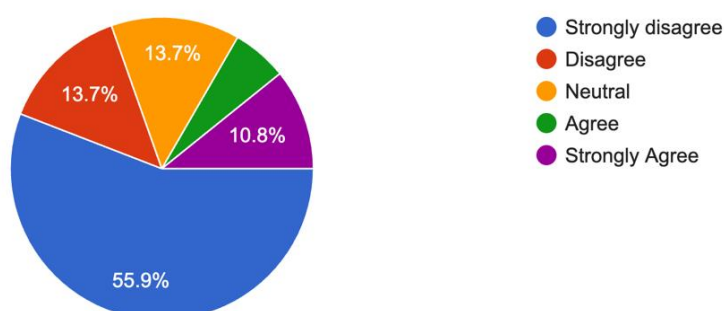


Figure 4: Percentage of residents who perceived that DRP is a good initiative by NMC.



Only a minor (8.8%) proportion of students agreed that DRP would improve their clinical skills. Majority (68.6%) of students disagreed that DRP

would be helpful in learning clinical skills as shown in Figure 5.

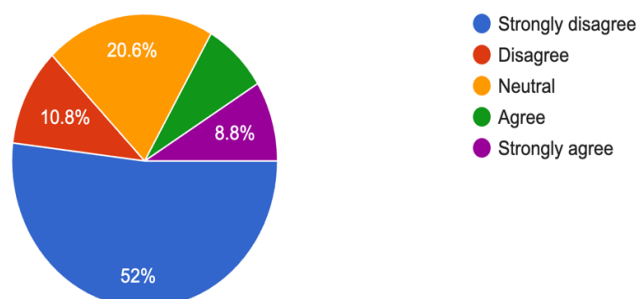


Figure 5: Percentage of postgraduates who perceived that DRP would improve their clinical skills.

The responses to open-ended questions from postgraduate students regarding DRP were quantified from the contents. Descriptive categories were then framed from the contents.

Varied responses to strengths of DRP were obtained from postgraduate students. About 29.4% postgraduates considered that DRP gave them an opportunity to improve their learning in terms of:

- Good patient load
 - Clinical management under limited resources
- While 22.5% postgraduate students submitted that this program made them learn clinical practice under rural settings, 10.78% did not find the program to be useful. The most common responses obtained have been summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Percentage of postgraduate students and their response for strengths of DRP

Response	Postgraduate student	
	n	%
DRP provided an opportunity to enhance clinical skills	30	29.4
Learned to work under rural settings	23	22.5
Did not find the program to be useful	11	10.78

Some other responses to strengths of DRP were:

- Learned to work under limited resources.
- Hands-on experience in patient care
- Change of work atmosphere

Similarly, the responses to weaknesses of this program were also quite varied. 42.2 % postgraduates were dissatisfied with the accommodation, transport, and food facilities. Their major complaints were:

- Unhygienic conditions
- Improper food facility
- Safety issues at district health postings etc.

On the contrary, 28.4 % students were not satisfied with the learning experience because of following reasons:

- Could not learn about their chosen speciality.
- Limited learning resources
- No skill training.
- Lack of support from the admin staff as well as clinicians

10.8 % residents were so unhappy that they considered this program as improper utilization of time as depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: Percentage of postgraduate students and their response for weaknesses of DRP

Response	Postgraduate student	
	n	%
Inadequate accommodation, transport & food facility	43	42.2
Poor learning experience due to lack of resources and learning material	29	28.4
Improper utilization of time	11	10.8



When the postgraduate students were asked to suggest recommendations for its successful implementation, 43.1% students suggested that proper accommodation and food facilities should be provided during DRP posting.

24.5% postgraduate students were not satisfied with this program and recommend it to be discontinued while 6.9% students recommended that postings should be allotted based on the respective speciality of post-graduation of the concerned student as depicted in Table 3.

Table 3: Percentage of postgraduate students and their response for recommendations for successful implementation of DRP

Response	Postgraduate student	
	n	%
Proper accommodation, transport & food facility should be ensured	44	43.1
DRP should be called off or duration should be reduced	25	24.5
Postings should be according to the concerned speciality of postgraduation	7	6.9

Discussion

The regulatory body for medical education, National Medical Commission (NMC) has introduced District Residency Programme (DRP) in district health system for 3 months. This programme is compulsory residential rotation for all postgraduate students of government and private medical colleges and deemed universities admitted in the year 2021 and onwards. It has been further clarified about district health system which includes all public sector and government funded hospitals like primary health centres, community health centres, urban health centres, sub health centres.³ As per the notification issued from Post Graduate Medical Education Board, NMC dated 19th January, 2023, the State Government will be responsible in providing accommodation, travel and security facilities especially to female residents as per the prescribed norms.¹ It is expected that the District Resident would fulfil his/her job responsibilities which would include services in inpatient, outpatient and casualty settings as well as night duties so that he/she may recognise the health care needs of the community and carry out professional obligations ethically keeping in view the needs of primary and secondary levels of health care delivery system.

However, it is imperative to gauge the successful implementation of any new programme. There is paucity of literature on perception of post graduate students for District Residency Programme. Thus, the present study was undertaken to gain insight and the personal experiences of postgraduate students at a private medical college so that necessary interventions can be done in a timely manner. Initial hiccups are quite frequent in implementation of any programme. Out of total 132 residents posted under District Residency Programme, 102 residents

participated in the study by filling a pre-validated anonymous questionnaire which consisted of several closed-ended and open-ended questions.

In the present study, 72.5% of postgraduate students completed the required posting under District

Residency Programme while the remaining 27.5% of residents were yet to complete their district posting. It has been clearly stated that the State Government should provide appropriate facilities to the district residents like proper accommodation, transport, and security especially to female residents.¹ However, the present study revealed that majority of district residents were not satisfied with the accommodation facilities and rated them as very poor and below average facilities. Most of the district residents were also dissatisfied with the internet facilities as well as food and hygiene facilities. It was observed that the residents were quite unhappy with the learning environment which was provided during their posting under District Residency Programme.

Most of the residents disapproved the fact that DRP is relevant to post-graduate curriculum. Since it was implemented for the first time, the residents find it difficult to accept it in the already vast and challenging post-graduate curriculum. This could be the reason that majority of residents disagreed that DRP is a good initiative in post-graduate curriculum and would help the residents in learning clinical skills.

The responses to open-ended questions were quite varied. The district residents were asked about the justified strengths of this programme. About 29.4% postgraduates considered that DRP gave them an opportunity to improve their learning in terms of good patient load and clinical management under limited resources. While 22.5% residents submitted that this



program made them learn clinical practice under rural settings, 10.78% did not find the program to be useful. This might be due to the fact that the objectives of this programme were not quite clear to the district residents. It is imperative that the programme coordinator must ensure that the objectives of this programme are clearly communicated to the district residents before commencement of their postings under DRP. This has also been clearly mentioned in the notification issued by NMC that the district residents should work under the supervision of a District Residency Programme Coordinator (DRPC).¹ The district residents also responded to justified weaknesses of this programme. About 42.2% postgraduates were dissatisfied with the accommodation, transport, and food facilities. Their major complaints were that the conditions were unhygienic, lack of proper food facility and security issues at district health postings. However, 28.4% students were not satisfied with the learning experience because they could not learn about their chosen speciality, learning resources were limited, lack of skill training and lack of support from the admin staff as well as clinicians. About 10.8 % residents were so unhappy that they considered this program as improper utilization of time. The district residents have also responded to suggestions for the successful implementation of DRP. Most of the residents suggested that there should be proper accommodation and food facilities during district postings. The residents also recommended to ensure that district postings should be allotted based on the respective speciality of post-graduation of the concerned student. The above findings clearly indicate the pivotal role of a District Residency Programme Coordinator in its successful implementation. The Programme coordinator must ascertain that the objectives of the programme are clearly communicated to the district residents before the commencement of DRP. The coordinator should be able to build a rapport with the district residents so that the residents could contact him/her in case of any difficulty and are not deprived of the basic facilities like proper accommodation, food, and security. Maintenance of proper logbooks of the residents posted under DRP in which record of the work done during district postings should be entered on a daily basis should be made mandatory.

Conclusion

The District Residency Programme has been made mandatory for all post-graduate students admitted in the year 2021 and onwards. Since it is implemented for residents for the first time, the district residents were quite dissatisfied with the basic amenities like accommodation, transport, and security issues besides the learning environment and learning skills not

pertaining to their field of specialization. The study highlighted the crucial role of a District Residency Programme Coordinator (DRPC) for the successful implementation of DRP who will serve as a connecting link between the district residents and the state government authorities. A prior sensitization session regarding its objectives would be highly beneficial in the successful implementation of District Residency Programme.

Conflict of interest: None

Financial Support: None

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