

# City faces medicos crunch

## Medical Fraternity Looks For Ways To Meet Rising Demand For Docs

Bushra Baseerat | TNN

**Hyderabad:** Private superspecialty hospitals that have mushroomed at every corner in the city are struggling to cater to the growing requirement for doctors.

The doctor crisis is rooted in the long-drawn medical education (almost 12 years) and slow growth in the number of medical colleges. There are 36 colleges in the state with 4,000-odd seats. In contrast, the 531 engineering colleges in the state have a whopping 2.73 lakh seats.

Hospital administrators say that three times the current number of medical colleges are needed to fill the gap, though admitting that the quality of doctors would remain a cause for concern if colleges are allowed to mushroom at random and without a proper monitoring mechanism in place.

Also, the death of the "family doctor" concept has ensured that an MBBS is just not good enough. Spe-

cialisations and super specialisations are in demand and a graduate degree in medicine has lost its value. What's more, patients now prefer to go to a 'super specialist' even if the problem can be handled by an MBBS doctor.

There are an estimated 1,400 hospitals and nursing homes in the Greater Hyderabad jurisdiction. Of these, 90 hospitals have over 200 beds. Officials with AP Nursing Homes Association, which has 1,200 hospitals registered with it, say that around 75% of the doctors in these nursing homes are, in fact, trained in homoeopathy, ayurveda or unani.

The need for consultants is growing by 10-15% annually, an induction which hospitals would have managed easily in the past but not now. "Forget about quality, it has become

difficult to find a qualified person," says Dr M Veeraprasad, medical superintendent, Narayana Medical College, Vellore. "The patient load in hospitals swells by about 15% annually. Yashoda has a three-member team to scout for doctors through-

out the country," said G S Rao, managing director of this hospital chain. He adds that eight years ago, there were doctors knocking at the hospital's door. "Today, we can develop as much in-

frastructure as we want but the bottleneck is, there are no health-care professionals," says Dr R S Saluja, president-elect, AP Nursing Homes Association.

Moreover, other countries have reduced the intake of foreign doctors. "There is a huge variation in graduate and post graduate seats.

There are also many alternate options to branch out wherein the earning process starts much earlier so medicine on the whole does not appear lucrative," says Dr A Y Chary, former director, medical education.

But college chains in the state say that things changed for better in the recent past, though craze for engineering remains, enrolments in medicine have also increased.

"The enrolment in medical stream has gone up by 5% in the last two years," says D V Rao, vice-chairman, Narayana Group. Also, doctors who had gone abroad are returning back home lured by good hospitals and pay packets, say hospital administrators.

Waking up to the shortage, sources say that the state is set to get 10 more medical colleges in the next couple of years. Similarly, with MCI also giving a nod to increase the number of PG seats, experts said that it would take 5-10 years till these measures get reflected.

