

# District Residency Programme (DRP) for Postgraduates: The Community Medicine Perspective

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Sir,

The National Medical Commission's (NMC) introduction of the District Residency Programme (DRP) in 2023 marks a significant shift in postgraduate medical education in India. This mandatory three-month program aims to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical experience by immersing resident doctors in the realities of district-level healthcare.

### Core Objectives of the DRP:<sup>1</sup>

First, to expose the post-graduate student to the District Health System/ District Hospital and involve them in health care services being provided by District Health System/District Hospital for learning while serving;

Second, to acquaint them with the planning, implementation, monitoring, and assessment of outcomes of the National Health programmes at the district level.

And third, to orient them to promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services being provided by various categories of healthcare professionals under the umbrella of the National Health Mission.

### The DRP focuses on two key aspects:

First, enhancing Practical Skills: Resident doctors gain hands-on experience in outpatient care, inpatient management, casualty services, and their speciality areas within the district health system. This exposure equips them to handle diverse medical presentations and resource-limited settings.

Second, building Community Connect: The program fosters an understanding of public health challenges and healthcare delivery mechanisms at the grass-roots level. This sensitization is crucial for future medical professionals who may choose to practice in rural or underserved regions.

DRP offers Community Medicine postgraduates an invaluable opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and practice. By actively participating in public health initiatives and gaining clinical experience within the district system, they emerge as well-equipped public health professionals prepared to make a significant impact on community health. The community medicine postgraduates, as per the directives of National Medical Council, are to be posted in "Namma Clinic", Primary Health Centre/

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Urban health centre as Medical Officers and to assist in National Health Programme implementation.<sup>2</sup> This will help them to acquire clinical experience with a public health lens.

However, in some of the district hospitals, the community medicine postgraduates are posted in the wards/Outpatient departments as a substitute in the absence of that speciality postgraduates or posted in Medical record section to complete the partially filled out- patient/in-patient records. They are posted to Taluk hospitals but with no clear instructions of what duties have to be discharged. Such undirected jobs assigned to the community medicine postgraduates might have been due to lack of orientation to the District Surgeons/ administrators of District Hospitals about the goals of DRP and this in turn leads to lowering the morale of community medicine postgraduates and fails to achieve the purpose of establishing DRP.

## CONCLUSION

The DRP is a commendable initiative with the potential to transform medical education in India. Addressing the concerns around appropriate work to be assigned to community medicine postgraduates, tailored duties for them, including in national health programmes, outbreak investigations, Community needs assessment surveys, maternal and child health programmes, health statistics reporting, Immunization clinics, public health laboratories and awareness creation activities will be crucial for its

successful implementation.<sup>3</sup> This will ensure that residents will hone their ability to communicate complex public health concepts effectively to diverse audiences, including community members, policy-makers, and healthcare professionals and based on their experience, residents may be involved in advocating for policy changes that address identified gaps in healthcare delivery or improve community health outcomes.

This three-month immersion in the district health system perfectly complements their academic focus on public health and preventive medicine. Nevertheless, the program's success will hinge on continuous monitoring, feedback, and adaptation to ensure a truly enriching learning experience for resident doctors while strengthening healthcare delivery at the district level.

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