

The Right Stuff

There is a new wave in medical education. The trend now is to make the medical education more interactive, using new technologies. However at the end of the day the question still remains how do our patients rate us? Are the doctors of today technically sound but do they also possess empathy and leadership qualities? I believe that emotional intelligence is an important prerequisite to being a good doctor. Emotional intelligence is very important in a profession like medicine where we are dealing with human beings who are in pain, are scared and are looking at doctors to not only heal them physically but also to understand their emotional needs. Interestingly however, a lot of emphasis is placed on the incoming medical student's test scores, their ability to memorize facts and figures. The admitting committees in medical colleges have no way of determining whether these students have the emotional maturity, the will and determination to embark on this difficult yet rewarding journey.

The answer may be as simple as an essay with the medical college application telling the admission committees why the prospective student wants to join this profession? what is their motivation and what are their personal and professional goals? The process may also include an in-depth interview with the faculty members and a trained psychologist. This endeavor may be tedious but once we have enrolled the 'the right candidates' the payoff in the long run will be great.

After their enrollment in the medical college efforts should be made to make sure that we not only teach our students the science of medicine but we also teach them to be compassionate, empathic, caring doctors with leadership qualities. The curriculum should be adapted accordingly to encompass these competencies. The teaching faculty has to play the crucial role of being a role model.

There is also now a global culture of research all over the world the prospective students should also be asked about their research aptitude and the number of publications.

The admission committees should consider the multidimensional aspects of the student's achievements before admitting them into the medical college. Now just being able to memorize facts and regurgitating them during the examinations is not enough anymore. The patients are demanding more, the society is demanding more. Are we up for this challenge or will we continue with the status quo? Our decisions today will have long lasting impact on the quality of the health care professionals that we will be producing in this country for future generations.

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