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ACCESS TO NEUROLOGISTS ABYSMALLY POOR

A practitioner talks about the need to have more players in the field

Do a lot of sweat, toil and tears go into the making of a neurologist?

Yes, after your basic MBBS you have to do your MD medicine/paediatrics for a period of three years and then pursue DM/DNB neurology for another three years for your. After that most would like to do an additional fellowship. Seats at DM level are very limited – just 62 seats across the country.

Why neurology? When did you take the decision to specialise in this field?

Neurology was my passion even at the MBBS level when I was very impressed by my medicine professor, Dr PC Sathpathy, who diagnosed cases with mathematical precision. During my MD medicine at Bangalore I was attached for neurology training at NIMHANS, which rekindled this passion. The huge workload, fascination for teaching and upcoming treatment modalities were prime motivational factors which led to my studying neurology. I was already serving in the Army Medical Corps (AMC) when I was picked up at a very early stage by the Army and granted study leave for doing neurology. I got selected at

PGIMER, Chandigarh, in the first attempt and after clearing my DM in the first attempt. I am a graduate from the VSS Medical College, Sambalpur, in Orissa. I have worked in the command hospitals of Bangalore, Lucknow, and Kolkata. Before taking premature retirement from the Army, I was in the Faculty at Army Hospital (R&R) which is under Delhi University and is the Apex Armed Forces Hospital.

Is treatment expensive and how can it be made accessible to the general population?

Mostly no, but some drugs like interferon and Botulinum toxin are very expensive. We need to train more neurologists and impart additional training to our young physicians

Do we have the facilities or the required number of doctors?

Access to neurologists in our country is abysmally poor and that too limited to the metropolitan cities. In the US there are more than 10,000 neurologists, but in India there are hardly 1000 fully qualified functional neurologists.

Is it a stressful job?

Very, Neurology case evaluation requires immense time, patience and correlation with radiology/lab services. My colleagues and I spend approximately 72 to 80 hours a week in the hospital

Interviewed by Ayesha Banerjee

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Dr J D Mukherji, head, neurology, Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket, New Delhi

