

Common counselling 'a step towards one India, one exam'

MEDICAL ADMISSIONS Without this, the purpose of having a common entrance test is defeated, say experts

Gauri Kohli

gauri.kohli@htlive.com

After implementing the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to medical courses at the undergraduate, postgraduate and super specialty levels, the ministry of health and family welfare (MoHFW) announced last week that common counselling will be conducted at the state level for admission to medical courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Amendments made in the relevant regulations of Medical Council of India require the designated authority at the state/union territory level to do counselling for all medical institutions in the state, including those established by the Central government, state government, university, deemed university, trust, society, company, minority institutions or corporations.

The counselling for all-India quota seats at undergraduate and postgraduate levels will continue to be conducted by the Directorate General of Health Services, MoHFW.

Experts say that this move will help make the admission process more transparent and curb the alleged practice of capitation fee (donations) charged by colleges. According to Dr KK Aggarwal, national president-elect, Indian Medical Association, the students will not have to apply to multiple agencies for admission in the same state. "Moreover, it is necessary to conduct common counselling after NEET. Without common counselling, the purpose of having a common entrance test is defeated," he says.

The notification of state governments as the appropriate authority and single window for allocation of seats for UG (MBBS); PG (MD/MS/diploma) and super speciality (DM/MCh) is a welcome step and



■ The move includes merit as the sole criterion for medical admissions, say experts.

IMAGESBAZAAR

QUICK FACTS

- The ministry of health and family welfare (MoHFW) announced last week that common counselling will be conducted at the state level for admission to medical courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels
- The counselling for all-India quota seats at undergraduate and postgraduate levels will continue to be conducted by the Directorate General of Health Services, MoHFW.
- Students will not have to apply to multiple agencies for admission in the same state
- The notification is a welcome step and logical course to implementation of NEET as a single window entrance
- It will also ensure that each and every medical seat in the country is effectively utilised

COMMON COUNSELLING WILL ALSO ENSURE THAT NO COLLEGE IS ABLE TO CHARGE ANYTHING MORE THAN THE PRESCRIBED FEES

logical course to implementation of NEET as a single window entrance, says Dr Bipin Batra, executive director, National Board of Examinations.

"On December 5, 2016, the Central government had issued an advisory to this effect to all states and on January 24, 2017, all state governments had participated in a video conference chaired by the union health secretary to spearhead this reform. This includes merit

as the sole criterion for admissions. Students will no longer have to fill multiple application forms and run around for various institute/s and university counselling sessions. Since the scheme is notified under these regulations, it is mandatory and binding on all institutions covered under the scope of Indian Medical Council Act," he says.

It will also ensure that each and every medical seat in the country is effectively utilised and that no college is able to charge anything other than the prescribed fees. After NEET UG 2016 was conducted by Central Board of Secondary Education, the ministry in consultation with states and other stakeholders had issued an advisory on August 9, 2016 to the states to preferably con-

duct combined counselling for admission to MBBS courses for session 2016-17. The University Grants Commission, through a letter dated September 15, 2016, had directed all deemed universities that they will also be part of common counselling for admission in common courses organised either by state government/Central government or through its agencies based on the marks obtained in NEET.

Another advisory for common counselling at the state level was issued in December 2016 for admission to PG courses for the session 2017-18. "The advisories were issued since counselling was not covered under any regulations and the entire admission process had evolved as an administrative mechanism. But now with the amendment noti-

fications in Graduate Medical Education Regulations, 1997 and the Post Graduate Medical Education Regulation, 2000, enabling legal provisions have been made for common counselling," says a ministry statement.

Doctors and medical students have also welcomed the move. "Though the issue of common counselling for NEET SS needs more clarification, even if it is implemented at the UG/PG levels, centralised counselling will certainly put an end to malpractices during the admission process. It will give a sense of security to the medical aspirants and cut down on unnecessary inconvenience and cost incurred in attending multiple counselling sessions thereby providing equal opportunities to all the candidates. It is another move towards strictly implementing the concept of one India, one exam," says Dr Akash Mathur, a Jaipur-based doctor who is a NEET SS aspirant.