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Admission of Sri Lankan students for medical education: time to review

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Introduction

In this submission we discuss aspects of selection of students to medical schools and basic qualifications that students should possess to follow medical courses outside Sri Lanka with the hope of practicing medicine in Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka A Level students are chosen to study medicine based on merit and district quotas.

Undergraduate medical education in Sri Lanka began in the 19th century with a short-lived medical school in Manipay (1848) and next the Ceylon Medical College in 1870. After nearly a century other medical schools were opened, and at present there are eight government medical schools and one other under the Ministry of Defense. During these 167 years or so, global changes have taken place regarding the concept of the role of the physician, primary health care, community based health care, family medicine, mental health, health of the elderly, investigative medicine, information technology and educational theory. These changes have influenced the direction and philosophy of medical education and the kind of starting material that should be recruited for medical studies.

The starting material, the student, has to be pluripotent, have adequate intellectual capacity and the potential to acquire skills if he is to be molded into a 'quality doctor'. Proper selection of this student is of paramount importance if we are to fulfill the ultimate aim of producing good and competent doctors.

Current system of selection to medical education

The University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka stipulates 3 S as minimum grades for entry to medical education. However, in practice, 3 S denotes only the eligibility for application since the selection of students for admission to a government medical faculty for a given academic year is based on the rank order of average Z-scores obtained by the candidates at the GCE Advanced Level Examination held in the related year, and released by the



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