

Training Pediatric Emergency Medicine Specialists in India

I congratulate the INDO-US group for advocating the need for Pediatric Emergency Medicine (PEM) as a super-specialty in India. The document states that “the concept of PEM is virtually non-existent in India [1].” I wish to share an experience that is contrary to this statement.

The 180-year-old, Madras Medical College, to which the Institute of Child Health (ICH) is affiliated, has an annual intake of 250 under-graduates and 54 pediatric post graduates. Established in 1997, our Pediatric Emergency Department (PED) was equipped by Japan’s International Cooperation Agency [2]. To sustain the project, the Tamil Nadu government sanctioned a faculty position in PEM. Over, the next 18 years, an overwhelming number of seriously ill and injured children were managed [3]. As septic shock was the commonest cause of mortality, a shock protocol was tested [4]. Lessons learnt were video-taped and conducted as the “Paediatric Emergency Medicine Course” [5]. In 2010, our University made completion of this course compulsory for house officers during their internship. Since 2011, a post-doctoral fellowship course is being conducted under the auspices of the University.

Under-five mortality due to infections is high in developing countries and emergency care reduces mortality. Despite significant differences in the morbidity profile of emergency visits in India [3], the INDO-US group reports that “PED in India is not an ED in the true sense”. Denying PEM’s existence in India is self-defeating in the pursuit of recognition of super-specialty status. Acknowledging that academic PEM in India might be different from the US, and engaging local expertise could help in achieving the much needed recognition for PEM super-specialty training.

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Training Pediatric Emergency Medicine Specialists in India: Authors’ Reply

We applaud the efforts highlighted by the author regarding their experience in PEM since 1997 at Madras Medical College and the Institute of Child Health. They have created a well-regarded course in PEM and most importantly, their results have been validated in peer-reviewed literature — which is the ultimate test for legitimacy. Recognition of faculty post in PEM by the state of Tamil Nadu is the right step in the right direction to establish PEM as a super specialty in India. However, it is not even the tip of the iceberg of what is the actual need at the national level.

We recognize that the efforts for recognition of PEM are being made at some of the institutes in India, but these need to be done at a larger level. The intent of this white paper [1] is to provide a curriculum as the basis for creation of PEM as a super-specialty at academic institutes. The compare-and-contrast approach using the PEM curriculum in the United States, is a suggestion because in many instances we do not have to reinvent the wheel and the positives from well-established programs can be emulated. Furthermore, the curriculum has been modified based on the needs and resources of our country. There is a need to have a “standardized” curriculum across the country keeping in mind the local