

## Medical students upset by repeated exam changes

### 'Study Legalities Before Introducing Process Like NEET'

Yogita Rao & Hemali Chhopia TNN

Lakhs of medical aspirants in the country are left facing mid-course changes in their preparations after the Supreme Court decided to quash the single-window National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET).

Rajlaxmi Iyer, a class XII student in Mumbai, said, "Last year, there were apprehensions about whether Maharashtra will adopt NEET. Months after it was accepted, the test has got cancelled. Most students start preparing for entrance examinations in class XI. We will now have to make major adjustments to our preparation methods."

Students in Maharashtra are also upset because NEET was based on NCERT syllabus of classes XI and XII, whereas the state's MHT-CET is based on state board curriculum of class XII. Although the state board too has adopted most of NCERT course outline, the syllabus for NEET was more extensive. So, many pupils spent months studying topics that may no longer be important for the admission process.

"The government should stop experimenting on students and study all the legalities before implementing any new system," said a parent. Added Aakash Chaudhry, director of Aakash Educational Services: "Students have to go through unnecessary stress due to such changes."

Chirag Shah, a postgraduate student, had to undergo a testing time this year with the implementation of NEET for PG admissions. "The court case delayed our entrance test results by three months, in turn delaying admissions," said Shah.

Another student said a uniform test is the only way to ensure a fair admission process: "Seats in PG courses are often sold for crores, which could have been avoided with a centralised process."

A section of educationists too were dismayed by the verdict. Dr Vivek Korde, president and founder of the Forum Against Commercialisation of Education, said the decision means that "students will have to take multiple entrance tests. Also, as in the past, private colleges will have a free run and we may see a lot of malpractice in selection processes".

The state government, however, claimed that they benefited with NEET's implementation. Minister of state for medical education D P Sawant maintained that more students qualified for medical and dental seats in the state through NEET as compared to MHT-CET. Nevertheless, after the apex court order, the state will have to go back to its original testing process.

Pravin Shingare, director, directorate of medical education and research, said the notification for next year's CET will be out in eight days. "There will not be any change in the MHT-CET exam. The pattern will remain the same as the ones before 2013."

#### FINDING THE RIGHT ANSWER

**OLD SYSTEM** | Until 2012, most states followed their own admission procedures, some used class XII scores and others conducted entrance exams. In Maharashtra, the state administered MHT-CET whose scores were used by government institutes; an association of private colleges meanwhile had its own entrance exam. The Central Board of

Secondary Education (CBSE) conducted the All-India Pre-Medical Test and 15% of seats in all medical and dental colleges nationwide were reserved for candidates appearing for this test **NEET SYSTEM** | Admissions to all government medical and dental colleges across the country were based on the scores of the Medical Council of India's National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET). For undergraduate courses it was administered by the CBSE, and for post-graduate courses by the National Board of Examinations. The first NEET was conducted for the term beginning 2013. An all-India merit list was generated along with a separate merit list for each state. Private colleges too were asked to accept NEET scores **CHALLENGE** Apart from private colleges, state governments of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu moved court against the NEET system

## **SUPREME COURT VERDICT**

The powers conferred on MCI and Dental Council of India under the provisions of the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956, and the Dentists Act, 1948...are restricted to laying down standards which are uniformly applicable to all medical colleges and institutions in India to ensure the excellence of medical education in India.... The MCI is not empowered under the 1956 Act to actually conduct the NEET

## **ROAD AHEAD**

Admissions based on NEET scores this year will not be disturbed. From next year, states can go back to their own admission processes. Maharashtra will have to conduct MHT-CET like earlier. Private colleges can return to their admission procedures again

The council is studying the judgment. It will soon decide on the next step **Dr P Prasannaraj | MCI ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR**

After the verdict, it will be difficult to keep tabs on irregularities in private colleges' admissions. A central test would have checked the malpractice to an extent. Also, students who have paid lakhs to coaching centres for NEET preparation will lose their money **Jayant Jain | PRESIDENT, FORUM FOR FAIRNESS IN EDUCATION**

The idea of a national test was conceived with a view to save students from travelling from city to city to appear for, say, 25 different medical entrance exams. We proposed it as an eligibility test, not to take away the powers of private colleges or state governments **Dr Devi Shetty | CARDIOLOGIST**

We feel the whole change in process was an experiment on us. With no clarity on admissions, we feel like tortured guinea pigs **Akshesh Modi | RANKED 835 IN PG NEET**

I am not sure what will be the basis of medical admissions in the next academic session. My friends and I started preparing for NEET from class XI. We hope the state government will soon clarify its stand **Natasha Rajeev | CLASS XII STUDENT**

Mahesh Benkar

