

Common exit test for MBBS grads?

Can't Treat Patients Without Clearing Exam: MCI

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New Delhi: Those intending to become doctors and treat patients may soon have to clear a common exit test after getting the MBBS degree from medical colleges.

The regulating body, Medical Council of India (MCI), has given a statutory recommendation for a mandatory exit test, which is under active consideration of the health ministry, the Supreme Court was informed on Friday.

Considering the sensitive nature of the profession—dealing with life and death—and keeping in mind varying standards of education in medical colleges, MCI has proposed a common exit examination for MBBS pass-outs intending to become doctors and treat patients, Solicitor General Gopal Subramaniam told a Bench of Justices R V Raveendran and H L Gokhale.

This recommendation of the MCI was to standardise the skills of doctors, said the regulatory body's counsel senior advocate Amarendra Saran supplementing the arguments of the health ministry advanced through the SG. This is in line with the decision of the Bar Council of India (BCI) making it mandatory for law graduates to clear a test to be able to practice in courts.

Importantly, both Subramaniam and MCI counsel, senior advocate Amarendra Saran, informed the bench that very soon a notification would be issued to put in place a single window admission test for filling post-graduate course seats in all private and government medical colleges from the next academic session (2011-12).

This would ease the tension and trouble of thousands of students competing for few PG seats, for which they have to travel to different places to appear in entrance examinations for PG courses of different colleges. Clashing of the dates of examination used to add to the woes of the students. But, these will be a thing of past from next year, thanks to the common entrance test for PG seats in all private and government medical colleges.

However, the joint attempt of the MCI and the government to push through the common admission test for MBBS courses in private and government medical colleges did not get the stamp of approval from the apex court, which said it could not do so without getting the responses from the state governments.

The reluctance of the SC stemmed from the fact that Tamil Nadu, which has a special law for the purpose that has received President's assent, had strongly objected to the common admission test for MBBS across the country. "We do not know which all states will object to this and how the students, a volatile community, would react to this proposal. So, let the Centre put before us the proposal and we will seek the response of the state governments," the bench said.

The SG agreed and said though the health ministry was carrying out the task of achieving a consensus among the states for a single window admission test for MBBS courses, it would be easier and expeditious if the apex court helped through the judicial process to achieve the goal that would benefit the entire community of students aspiring to be doctors. The SC has given a week's time to place the proposal before it for issuance of notices to the state governments to elicit their response. **BITTER PILL**

The Medical Council of India's recommendation for a mandatory exit test is under the active consideration of the health ministry. Move aims at standardising skills of doctors. The medical apex body will issue notice to put in place a single window admission test for PG seats in all medical colleges from 2011.

