



CLINICAL POSTINGS: EVALUATING THEIR CREDIBILITY

Palak Gupta MBBS student

Naveya MBBS student

ABSTRACT A medical student goes through a myriad of experiences during an MBBS course in India, starting right from rigorous textbook studies to hands-on clinical experience. An indispensable part of this educational odyssey in India is the clinical posting that medical undergraduates undergo. Clinical postings in the Indian medical education system comprise clinical rotations in surgery, medicine, paediatrics, psychiatry, respiratory medicine, obstetrics and gynaecology and community medicine. Clinical postings span from the second year up to the final year of undergraduate study. Notably, the duration of these postings is typically two and a half hours daily. Although seeming brief, these two hours are a melting pot of experiences. This article aims to critically assess the credibility of the clinical postings and their impact on the holistic development of an upcoming physician.

KEYWORDS : MBBS , clinical postings, hands on experience

What do clinical postings teach us?

The overarching goal of the postings is to allow students to dabble in the diverse realms of medical specialities and provide a tangible understanding of the medical system. Students aren't just bystanders; they are active participants, evolving with every patient they meet. They develop the skill of translating a patient's chief complaint into a definitive diagnosis and subsequently, the most effective intervention and treatment strategy.

Yet, beyond the sheer medical knowledge, there's an underlying tapestry of understanding one's personal preference. These postings act as a compass, nudging students towards recognising their intrinsic liking or inclination towards a particular speciality. Such realisations aren't just serendipitous; they are born from witnessing varied medical cases, understanding the nuances of different specialities, and identifying with them.

Hands-on vs textbook learning

A key feature in favour of these postings is having an edge of experiential knowledge over rote learning. There's a clear-cut difference between reading about a medical condition and witnessing it firsthand. The latter imprints an unerasable mark on the student's mind. Observational learning, paired with hands-on experience, ensures that knowledge stays longer and is recalled with higher accuracy than one purely acquired from books.

However, not all students view these postings from the same vantage point. The rationale is that the constrained duration might not be as fruitful as a deep, focused study. Some students prefer using these clinical posting hours for self-study instead of scoring better than their peers in their subjective exams. Drawing from personal experience, this perspective doesn't necessarily hold water. The lessons learned from real-life clinical scenarios, the intricacies of the doctor-patient relationship, and a medical practitioner's skills can't be mirrored by textbooks.

Furthermore, these postings infuse a deeper, often overlooked aspect of medical practice empathy. Medical sciences aren't just about diagnosing and treating; it's about understanding, relating, and comforting. Observing seasoned physicians empathise with their patients, understanding their fears, and comforting them, these postings imbue students with a sense of humanity that's vital for the medical journey.

Concerns about the credibility of clinical postings in India

Concerns about the credibility of clinical postings in India are broadly categorised under duration, efficiency, and quality.

Clinical Posting Duration

The duration of clinical postings in India is two hours and a half per day, starting from the second year of medical school and continuing until the final year. On comparing with the duration of clinical rotations-which is four to six hours per day, in other developed countries, such as the United States, in India it is considerably shorter.

The short duration is a concern because it limits the amount of time that students get to interact with the patients, gain knowledge from experienced physicians, and improve their clinical skills. Additionally, the short duration of clinical postings may make it difficult for students to gain a comprehensive understanding of the different medical specialities.

The Efficiency of Clinical Postings

Another concern about clinical postings in India is their efficiency. Students often devote a considerable amount of time on non-clinical tasks, such as running errands, completing calls from one department to another and doing paperwork. As a result, this significantly decreases amount of time that students get to learn from patients and physicians.

Additionally, students may have to do rotations in hospitals that are overcrowded and understaffed. This can make it difficult for students to build relationship with patients and get optimum guidance and knowledge they need from physicians. This also decreases the amount of clinical exposure.

Quality of Clinical Postings

The quality of clinical postings in India can also vary depending on the hospital. Some hospitals have well-organised and well-supervised clinical rotations, while others do not.

Evaluating the Credibility of Clinical Postings

Medical students can evaluate the credibility of their clinical postings by considering the following listed factors:

- The duration of the posting: Is the duration provided sufficient to allow me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the speciality?
- The efficiency of the posting: Do I get sufficient time to interact with patients and learn and gain knowledge from the physicians?
- The quality of the supervision: Are the physicians and other healthcare professionals experienced and qualified enough to teach me?
- The learning opportunities: Will I be given fair chance to observe and perform in a variety of clinical procedures?

Incase students are concerned about the credibility of their clinical postings, they should approach and talk to their supervisors and trusted mentors.

How to Improve the Credibility of Clinical Postings in India

Several measures can be taken to improve the credibility of clinical postings in India.

These include:

- Increasing the duration of clinical postings: This would provide students more time to interact with patients, learn from physicians, and develop their clinical skills.
- Improving the efficiency of clinical postings: This can be by reducing the amount of time that students spend on non-clinical tasks.
- Ensuring that all hospitals have well-scheduled and well-supervised clinical rotations: This would ensure that all medical

students have the opportunity to learn and develop their clinical skills in a safe and supportive environment.

CONCLUSION

For any aspiring student, these experiences are not just mere hours of exposure but foundational building blocks in their medical journey. While the debate on the optimal use of clinical posting hours will persist, one cannot debilitate its importance. They serve as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and its practical application.

If students are concerned about the credibility of their clinical postings, they can evaluate by considering the factors discussed above.