

## Unlocking the Potential of Electives in India's New Competency-Based Medical Education Curriculum

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Dear Editor,

I am writing to express my enthusiasm about the potential of elective postings in India's new Competency-based Medical Education (CBME) curriculum. Electives offer diverse trainings, from specialized training to interest-based courses. In its simplest form, they let students choose parts of a training program, unlike mandatory core courses. This optional education aspect dates back to medieval times and was first formalized in the United States at the University of Virginia in 1819<sup>(1)</sup>.

An Elective is a learning experience created in the curriculum to provide an opportunity for the learner to explore, discover, and experience areas or streams of interest in the profession. In India, recognizing the value of elective courses, the National Medical Commission (NMC), formerly known as the Medical Council of India (MCI), officially incorporated them into the CBME curriculum<sup>(2)</sup>. This curriculum has been in effect since the admission of the 2019 batch.

This innovative approach promises to revolutionize medical education and address the evolving healthcare landscape of our country. Elective postings, in particular, present a unique opportunity to enhance students' learning experiences, foster specialization, and produce well-rounded medical professionals. The shift from traditional curricula to competency-based education is a significant step toward aligning medical education with the changing healthcare demands. This approach emphasizes the development of specific skills and knowledge that are essential for medical practitioners. Elective postings can play a pivotal role in this transformation by allowing students to explore specialized fields of medicine and gain hands-on experience in areas of their interest. This not only enhances their clinical skills but also cultivates a passion for their chosen field, leading to improved engagement and motivation in their studies.

One of the key advantages of elective postings is that they enable students to tailor their learning experiences to align with their career aspirations. By exposing students to various medical specialties and healthcare settings, elective postings facilitate informed decision-making regarding future specialization. This is particularly crucial in a country as

diverse as India, where healthcare needs vary drastically from region to region. Elective postings can help students develop a more nuanced understanding of the healthcare challenges and opportunities in different areas, contributing to a more targeted and effective healthcare workforce distribution.

Electives enhance the core curriculum, bolster individual and team-based learning, and foster the development of organizational skills<sup>(3)</sup>. Moreover, elective postings encourage a well-rounded education by allowing students to explore interdisciplinary connections within the medical field. Collaborative patient care often requires knowledge from various specialties, and elective experiences can foster a holistic approach to patient management.

It's worth noting that elective postings can also encourage innovation and research among medical students. When passionate about their chosen elective, students are more likely to engage in research and contribute to advancements in that field. This aligns with the broader goal of the competency-based curriculum to produce not only skilled clinicians but also critical thinkers and problem solvers who can drive medical research and innovation forward.

However, to fully unlock the potential of elective postings, several considerations must be taken into account. Adequate resources and mentorship must be provided to ensure that students receive high-quality education during their elective periods. Standardized assessment methods should be developed to evaluate students' competencies accurately across different electives. Additionally, efforts should be made to establish collaborations between medical schools and healthcare institutions to provide a wide range of elective options for students.

In conclusion, integrating electives into India's CBME curriculum shows great potential. This aligns medical education with changing healthcare needs, enabling students to follow their interests, make informed career decisions, and contribute to the sector. Electives offer specialization, interdisciplinary learning, and research opportunities, shaping adaptable, innovative medical professionals ready to address our nation's evolving healthcare demands.

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