

Editorial

Ragging in Medical College: A burning issue to be addressed strongly.

Ideally the educational institution should be a safe haven for the students but often it is not like so. Sometimes at the beginning of the institutional journey students face some adverse situation which is present mostly all over the world now a days. This process is called 'Hazing' in North America and in South Asia is has been termed as 'Ragging'.^{1,2} There is a wide range of 'Ragging', starting from welcoming to serious violent acts. Usually it consists of intimidation, harassment, humiliation and even sexual abuse. In some countries forceful binge drinking have also been reported. Most commonly it is conducted by the senior group of people.³ Apart from educational institution this process is common in military, gangs and sport clubs. According to international studies the prevalence of ragging ranges from 37-78% among institutions and clubs.⁴ In most of the South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Nepal or Sri Lanka the 'ragging period' continues for few months till the victim gets acquainted and makes bond with the senior students.⁵

In all over the world the depression rate of medical students are higher than the general population. The common causes of depression are study related stress, fear of drop out and stress due to curriculum.⁶ Though there is no conclusive remark regarding in which year the depression is most, but in some studies it was found that internship year had a turbulence time for most of the medical students.⁷ In the recent years 'Ragging' has become one of the key etiological factors for the depression for the medical students. Few cases of severe mental trauma including suicide have reported in different medical schools of South Asia the last decade.⁷

According to a Nepalese study among the different types of medical institution student MBBS students suffered from highest percentage (66.8%) of ragging followed by nursing students (13.3%).⁸ Ragging was also found in MD students (8.3%) and BDS students (3.3%). More than one-third (38.3) of the victim

experienced both verbal and physical ragging, whereas 5% student experienced physical abuse.

The ill effects of 'Ragging' in medical school have all the dimensions like physical injury by beating, fording for dangerous tasks, sexual harassment including stripping, forceful masturbation, unnatural sex. Other adverse effects of 'Ragging' are lack of concentration and confidence, inferior complexity, financial exploitation, constant fear and a lots.⁹ There are some common reasons have been detected for ragging by the seniors in the medical colleges.¹⁰

1. Senior wants to maintain the tradition as they were also ragged.
2. To establish the sense of seniority.
3. Introducing themselves to the juniors.
4. Use of abusing substances and alcohol in the hostels.
5. Lack of supervision and lack of law-enforcement by the hostel and institutional authorities.
6. No hostel superintendent or hostel warden appointed.
7. Not considering ragging as a social offence.

There are few steps could be recommended for the correction of this social issue:¹⁰

1. At the beginning of the session each students to be informed by the head of the institution that ragging is banned in the college.
2. An anti-ragging disciplinary committee could be formed in each medical college.
3. Contact number of the teachers or faculty members could be provided to the new comers as an emergency hotline.
4. Different organizations like medical associations, teachers association and other volunteer organizations could be involved for the solution of the problem.

5. Recreational drugs, alcohol and smoking to be prohibited in the hostel and college premises.
6. Compulsory appointment of hostel superintendent or warden to be ensured.
7. Teachers should be regularly assess the handwriting of the practical note books to find out if was written by someone else or not.
8. Complaint boxes to be arranged in hostel, college and other places so that victim can ask help.
9. In each hostel hostel-prefect and floor-prefect to be select from the responsible senior most students.
10. Strong punishment to be enforced for the senior student who have proven guilty of ragging.

Ragging has become a burning issue for most of the medical colleges now a days. Administration should have zero tolerance commitment against the ragging. Proper surveillance, prevention and punishment can reduce the incidence of this problem. In order to ensure a safe and sound study environment in the medical instructions anti-ragging movement is essential.

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