NEW DELHI: The Medical Council of India (MCI) has finally cleared introduction of the three-and-a-half-year long medical course. Calling it BSc in Community Health, it will be open to anybody after class 12.

Speaking to TOI, MCI board chairman Dr K K Talwar said this special cadre of health workers will be trained mainly in district hospitals, be placed in sub-centres or primary health centres and will be taught "some module of clinical work".

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This means this cadre can actually diagnose and treat basic medical cases, get involved in immunization programmes and administer extended first aid.

"We intend to introduce the course from April next year. This cadre will also refer patients according to their condition to other centres. We have also prepared the syllabus of the course. The ministry will now take the final call," Dr Talwar said.

Health secretary P K Pradhan has called a high level meeting on Tuesday to finalize the proposal.

The Planning Commission's high level expert group has strongly backed the all new health cadre and said that as a career progression incentive, they should be promoted to the level of public health officers after 10 years of service.

The health ministry has been strongly pushing for the introduction of this cadre, in order to tackle the menace of doctors unwilling to serve in rural areas. Only 26% of doctors in India reside in rural areas, serving 72% of India's population. The urban density of doctors is nearly four times that of rural areas, and that of nurses is three times higher.

Things have taken a turn for the worse in the past few decades with the disappearance of certain cadres — village health guides and traditional birth attendants, first instituted in 1986. Experts said the selection of students would be based on merit in the Class 12 examination with physics, chemistry and biology as subjects. Health minister Ghulam Nabi Azad had earlier said that he wanted an MCI stamp on the degree so that it was universally recognized. "The syllabus of the course is also ready and is need-based. If MCI endorses it, students will get the confidence that the degree has a standing," he had said.

The panel, however, was clear that the course was not a mini-MBBS but rather a unique training programme aimed at the basic health care needs of its target population.
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Readers' opinions (96)

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Dr. Raman (Pune)
30 Sep, 2012 05:17 PM
The MCI should provide this degree in one year after extensive training to the AYUSH doctors because they already know the basics of medicine and only need to be trained on allopathic medicine with a valid degree from MCI. It will bring them in mainstream and confidence.

Achla Gupta (SAHARANPUR)
29 Sep, 2012 11:32 PM
Actually MCI should build more medical colleges. Number of seats for MBBS students should increase. The incentives and infrastructure at rural health centers be more doctor-friendly.

Onkarrathod (Mumbai)
29 Sep, 2012 11:30 AM
Why B. Pharmacy students should not be given a 2-year extended course and this opportunity? Government...please don't play with the health of rural Indians by not using your brains. Optionally, let the villagers travel and find their doctors in Tahasil places or so.

Jyotiranjan Mohanty (Cuttack, Orissa)
26 Sep, 2012 04:01 PM
Three and a half year medical course after class 12 by MCI is a good step and also a good news for the students as well as for the parents.

Kishore Kumar (Kayamkulam)
25 Sep, 2012 11:04 PM
Something seriously wrong with our planners and one doctor for 250 people is nonsense. It is practically impossible to have a doctor in every village without the required infrastructure. Even after 64 years of self rule, many of our district headquarters do not have a good hospital worth the name. The easiest way out to help the villagers isolated is to have a Govt. dispensary in every village manned by a health worker and a nurse and ambulance working 24 x 7 x 365. The other option will be to pay double the salary to the health workers in villages as they get in towns. The best option is to help the owners of black money in Swiss banks by permitting them to build medical institutions/colleges in villages and not to ask the source of funds. Unfortunately, our masters do not have the farsightedness Dr. TMA had in the 50s or the Americans had in the 17th century when they requested Sir Elihu Yale to invest his loot from India in US and they got Yale University!
Medical Council of India approves 3-and-a-half-year medical course - Times Of India

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