

The term brain was coined to describe the processes of relocation of trained and talented human resource from the less developed countries where they are needed to a more developed country where they are valued. The South Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka) are to an extent victims of their success in developing high quality educational institutions. This success has led to the development of a large group of highly talented individuals that if used appropriately can make a significant difference in their own particular spheres. The overall improvement in the educational opportunities has not been matched by an equal number of employment opportunities for these trained personnel. The jobs that are available typically pay significantly less than similar jobs available outside of the region.

Pakistan has over time lost a large number of doctors to the west; mainly to the United Kingdom (UK), the United States of America (USA) and Canada and the Middle East; primarily to Saudi Arabia (SA) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). With the political and security changes following the terrorist attacks of the 9th of September 2001 attacks in USA and the 7th July 2005 in the UK there was a slowing down of the movement to these countries. However this has been matched by an increasing demand in the Middle East as a large number of European and North American expatriate doctors have chosen to move back to their native countries and are increasingly being replaced by Asians.

The medical profession in Pakistan on the whole and Radiology in particular has greatly suffered because of this situation. A large number of radiologists and radiographers are now working outside Pakistan. While this has been beneficial for the individuals and their families in financial terms the profession has been the poorer for it. The impact is especially significant as this particular group (radiologists and radiographers) had a very small membership to begin with. With this small starting number the impact in terms of patient care has been significant.

As there is a severe shortage of appropriately trained manpower, radiological investigations are passing into the hands of non radiologists. Most worryingly these are on many occasions, people interpreting radiological images are not even medically qualified. This is nothing short of quackery. We need to take urgent stock of the situation and put in measure to address the issues. Our job as a profession is to highlight the issues and canvass for their urgent remedy. This needs a three pronged approach. First we need to increase the investment in healthcare to create the jobs for trained doctors and technologists. Second we need to increase the training slots, both for radiologists and technologists, to address the shortfall. Third we need strong legislation to curb the spread of quackery in radiology.

These cannot be achieved by the government alone. There needs to be a public private partnership so that the common goal of improved patient care can be achieved. The question should not be if it can be done but how. The private sector should provide the training and employment opportunities and the government should not only make legislation but enforce it. This enforcement needs to be even handed and fair. The private sector is already doing its part. Will the government realise its responsibility?

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