

## Original Research Article

### Post-graduate Students' Feedback on District Residency Program: A Cross-sectional Study

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#### ABSTRACT

##### Introduction

The District Residency Program (DRP) was implemented by National Medical Commission (NMC) for post graduate (PG) students from Batch 2021 onwards. All students of Batch 2021 and some students of Batch 2022 have completed their DRP posting in one year. This survey was conducted with the objective to get the feedback of students and identify the areas, if any, that require attention of the stakeholders for further improvement in the implementation of the program.

##### Methodology

IEC approval was taken before starting this study. An online questionnaire (Annexure-1) was prepared and validated. It was sent to 55 PG students of our institute who completed the DRP posting. The responses so collected were tabulated in Microsoft Excel sheets and statistical analysis was done.

##### Results

Out of 55 PG students, 37 responded to the online questionnaire. Thirty-three (89.1%) students felt that they received their subject specific training at least to some extent during DRP posting. This perception was significantly more in students of surgical specialties as compared to their medical counterparts ( $p=0.0276$ ). Sixteen (43.2%) students did not feel that their skills were enhanced. Fourteen (37.8%) students didn't feel motivated and confident after the posting. Nineteen (51.3%) students were not satisfied with the basic amenities provided to them during the posting. Eighteen (48.6%) students felt isolated from the parent institute and sixteen (43.2%) students never participated in the teaching activities of parent institute through online mode. Twenty-four (64.8%) students felt that the duration of DRP posting should be less than 3 months.

##### Conclusions

DRP is an ambitious program to enhance exposure and orientation of PG students to community health needs in district health care delivery system. Every effort should be made by stakeholders to provide good basic amenities to the students. Posting PG students at centers where specialists in respective subjects are available will generate sufficient clinical material to meet their training needs. The parent department should be in regular contact with the students and motivate them to actively participate in the departmental teaching activities through online platforms.

**Keywords:** District Residency Program, DRP, Feedback, PG students, Skills

## INTRODUCTION

The National Medical Commission (NMC) of India introduced the District Residency Program (DRP) as part of post-graduate (PG) training.<sup>1-3</sup> It has been implemented throughout the country from PG Batch 2021 onwards. The

primary objective of this program is to expose the PG students to the district health care delivery system of our country. During the training the students will also be acquainted with the outcomes of various national programs. In turn, this will strengthen the services of the district hospitals. Presently, the DRP posting is of 3 months duration, preferably at the end of second year or start of third

year of PG training. Satisfactory completion of DRP training is an eligibility criterion for PG students to appear in university examination.

The DRP training in medical colleges of Gujarat started from 1st June, 2023. It has been one year since this program was implemented. It is imperative now that the feedback of the PG students is taken so that changes, if deemed necessary, may be done to further enhance the efficacy of this program. To the best of our literature search, there are two publications regarding the feedback on this program.<sup>4,5</sup> Hence this survey was done to know the feedback of PG students of one center towards the DRP training. The findings of this study will guide the stakeholders in the right direction for improving the implementation of this program.

## METHODOLOGY

IEC approval was taken before starting this study. The DRP program in Gujarat is being coordinated by NMC designated Nodal Office at Ahmedabad. Three Sub-district hospitals (SDH) of the district with bed capacity of not less than 50 beds and availability of specialists were identified for DRP postings. 43 students PG Batch 2021 were equally distributed in 4 groups and were sent for DRP training in 4 quarters starting from 1st June, 2023. From 1st March 2024, 12 students of PG Batch 2022 also underwent DRP training. Hence, 55 students of our institute have completed DRP training till date. A questionnaire (Annexure-1) was prepared and validated. It was sent to 55 PG students as a Google Form. The participation in the survey was voluntary. All the responses were tabulated in Microsoft Excel sheet and analysis was done using SPSS software version 25.

## RESULTS

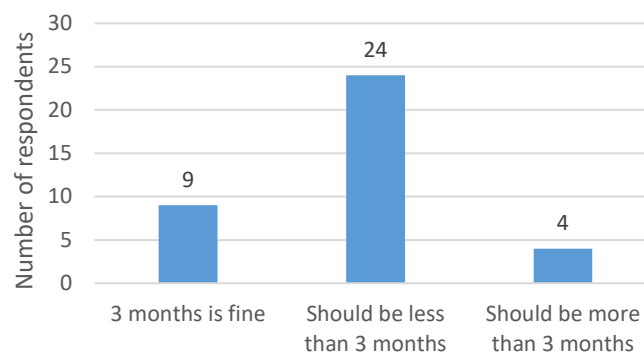
Out of 55 PG students, 37 responded to the online questionnaire. The responses are summarized in Table-1. For further analysis, a comparison was done between the students of surgical (Orthopedics, ENT, General Surgery, Anesthesiology, Ophthalmology and Obstetrics & Gynecology) and medical branches regarding skill specific training. Since the sample size was small, Fisher's exact test was applied for statistical significance. As compared to medical branches, the surgical branch students seem to have better exposure to perform surgeries and develop skills. Table-2 summarizes the responses. Students were also asked regarding the ideal duration of DRP posting. 24 (64.8%) students felt that the duration should be less than 3 months (Figure-1). Figure-2 depicts the overall satisfaction rating of students towards DRP posting.

**Table-1: Students' responses to the questionnaire**

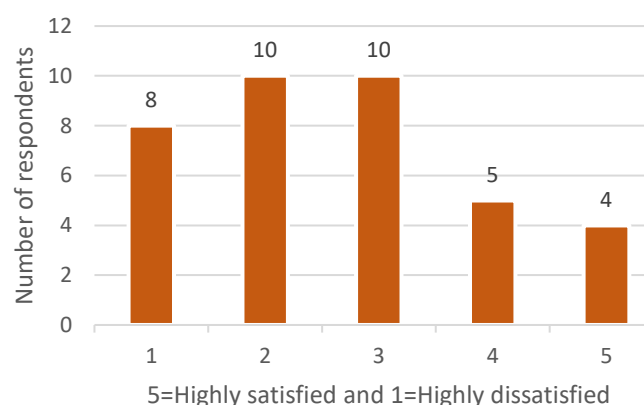
Question	Yes (N, %)	No (N, %)	May be/ To some extent/ Sometimes
Did you receive your subject specific training during DRP posting?	23 (62.1%)	4 (10.8%)	10 (27%)
Do you feel your subject specific skills have enhanced after your DRP posting?	12 (32.4%)	16 (43.2%)	9 (24.3%)
Do you feel confident and motivated after your DRP posting?	13 (35.1%)	14 (37.8%)	10 (27%)
Are you satisfied with the basic amenities (food, water, stay etc.) provided to you during your DRP posting?	12 (32.4%)	19 (51.3%)	6 (16.2%)
Were you in touch with the faculty members of your department of your parent institute during your DRP posting?	27 (72.9%)	7 (18.9%)	3 (8.1%)
Did you participate in the teaching-learning activities of your parent department through ONLINE mode?	10 (27%)	16 (43.2%)	11 (29.7%)
Did you feel isolated from your parent institute during your DRP posting?	18 (48.6%)	9 (24.3%)	10 (27%)

**Table-2: Comparison between responses of surgical and medical specialties**

Question	Medical specialties (N)		Surgical specialties (N)		P value
	Yes/ To some extent	No	Yes/ To some extent	No	
Did you receive your subject specific training during DRP posting?	12	4	21	0	0.0276 (Significant)
Do you feel your subject specific skills have enhanced after your DRP posting?	7	9	14	7	0.1964 (Not significant)
Do you feel confident and motivated after your DRP posting?	8	8	15	6	0.3051 (Not significant)



**Figure-1: Students' responses regarding the duration of DRP posting**



**Figure-2: Overall satisfaction rating of students towards DRP posting**

## DISCUSSION

Availability of specialists' medical services at district hospitals is a boon to the local community. DRP ensures that people do not have to travel far distances for their healthcare needs. It is a win-win strategy to enhance PG skill acquisition in real settings under which they are likely to work in future and to provide benefit at the near doorstep to people. However, proper planning is required for implementing DRP on such a large scale. There are certain aspects that need to be revisited so that DRP reaps maximum benefits.

### Subject specific training for PG students

The objective of 3 years PG training is that the students acquire the necessary skills that are expected of a specialist physician. Hence, the 3 months of DRP should be utilized very judiciously. Students should be posted in places where specialist doctors are available to guide them and there should be availability of necessary infrastructure and clinical material. 16 (43.2%) students of this center felt that

their skills were not enhanced after DRP posting. In a previous study, only 29.4% students felt that DRP provided an opportunity to enhance clinical skills.<sup>5</sup> Number of beds in a hospital should not be the only criterion for choosing a hospital for DRP posting. The hospital authorities should ensure that the necessary instruments and equipments required for a particular specialty are available in the hospital. At the end of DRP posting students should feel motivated and confident of the acquisition of clinical skills.

### Basic amenities to students

Nineteen (51.3%) students from the present survey were not satisfied with the basic amenities provided to them during their posting. Similarly, 42.2% and 51.22% students from previous studies were dissatisfied with the basic amenities.<sup>4,5</sup> In the parent institute hostel and mess facilities are available for students. But in district hospitals such facilities are usually not there. The students posted in such hospitals have to struggle for the basic amenities. The students may opt to stay outside the hospital campus. This increases their financial burden and also raises safety concerns, especially for females. Students posted in nearby hospitals prefer to return to their parent institute daily. This unnecessary travel fatigues them and poses them to accidental risks. These concerns were also highlighted by Dharmshaktu GS.<sup>6</sup> The DRP posting is now a continuous recurring program. Hence, it is the responsibility of district and state health authorities to provide a safe and sound working environment to the students. This will enhance their productivity. Hostel and mess facilities should be developed in district hospitals where students are posted or if possible, they may be allotted vacant government quarters. A welcome step by NMC to mitigate the accommodation problem is that in certain cases students can opt for DRP posting at hospitals in or near their home town. More students should be allowed to work near their home town.

### Thesis

The duration of data collection for PG thesis is generally 18-20 months. If a student is out of parent institute for 3 months, then it may affect the sample size of the thesis. The Institutional Ethics Committees should take this aspect into consideration and allow the students to include the patients from district hospitals also to their thesis. Alternatively, the duration of data collection should be reduced by 3 months.

### Teaching-learning activities

In the present survey, 16 students (43.2%) never participated in any teaching activity of the parent department and 18 (48.6%) students felt isolated from the department during their DRP posting. Similar sentiments of students are reflected in previous studies.<sup>4,5</sup> During their DRP posting the students work under supervision of the

superintendent of the district hospital. However, it doesn't imply that they will not be in touch with the parent institute. On the contrary, the PG guides and other faculty members should motivate them to actively participate in seminar, journal clubs, etc., through online platforms. They should not be felt left out.

### Duration of DRP posting

Twenty-four (64.8%) students in the present survey were of the opinion that DRP posting should be of less than 3 months duration. In a previous study, 24.5% students felt that DRP should be called off or duration should be reduced.<sup>5</sup> However, the authors feel that 3 months duration is optimum. Lesser duration may not be sufficient for them to adjust to the new environment and work efficiently. A greater duration may affect their overall PG training program.

'*Rome was not built in a day*'. DRP implementation may be having some gestational problems but with time and constructive efforts of all the stakeholders, it will prove to be very effective intervention in improving the secondary health care system of our country.

### Limitations and strengths of the study

This survey was conducted on a small sample size and at a single institute. Findings of this study may not be generalizable. However, we feel that this study is one of the earliest pieces of evidence of the students' perception of DRP and would be of great help to the policy makers to make a note of it and introduce certain changes in the program if deemed necessary.

## CONCLUSIONS

DRP is an ambitious program to strengthen the district health care delivery system vis a vis exposing the PG students to community health needs. Students should only be posted at places where specialists and necessary infrastructure are available and there is sufficient clinical material for them to enhance their skills. Since the students are posted for three months duration, every effort should be made by stakeholders to provide them with good basic amenities. The parent department should be in regular contact with the students and motivate them to actively participate in the departmental teaching activities through online platforms.

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### Annexure-1 (Online questionnaire)

1. Your subject
2. You were posted in which quarter?
  - 1<sup>st</sup> quarter
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter
  - 4<sup>th</sup> quarter
3. Your place of posting:
  - Gandhidham
  - Rapar
  - Mandvi
  - Other
4. Did you receive your subject specific training during DRP posting
  - Yes
  - No
  - To some extent
5. Do you feel your subject specific skills have enhanced after your DRP posting?
  - Yes
  - No
  - May be

6. Do you feel confident and motivated after your DRP posting?

- Yes
- No
- To some extent

7. Are you satisfied with the basic amenities (food, water, stay etc.) provided to you during your DRP posting?

- Yes
- No
- To some extent

8. Were you in touch with the faculty members of your department of your parent institute during your DRP posting?

- Yes
- No
- To some extent

9. Did you participate in the teaching-learning activities of your parent department through ONLINE mode?

- Yes (regularly)
- No (never)
- Sometimes

10. Did you feel isolated from your parent institute during your DRP posting?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

11. What do you think about the duration of DRP posting?

- 3 months is fine
- Should be less than 3 months
- Should be more than 3 months

12. Mention any specific problem that you faced during your DRP posting.

13. What are your suggestions to improve this program?

14. Your overall satisfaction with your DRP posting:

- 1= Highly dissatisfied
- 2=Dissatisfied
- 3=Neutral
- 4=Satisfied
- 5= Highly satisfied

**Source of support: Nil**

**Conflict of interest: None declared**

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