

Correspondence

Rehabilitation medicine in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

To the Editor

In reference to an article by Al-Jadid¹ that provides a commendable insight on rehabilitation medicine in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), I would like to further explore the training aspects of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) in the kingdom. The contribution of Non-Saudi board training programs in the specialty of PM&R in KSA deserves more attention. In October 2011, Saudi residency training program started under the Saudi Board of PM&R, which is indeed a landmark in the development of this upcoming specialty. Training opportunities in PM&R existed even before the start of this program, and few residents have already been trained under the umbrella of the Jordanian Board, and College of Physicians and Surgeons of Pakistan (CPSP) at different rehabilitation institutes in KSA.² These programs lead to a completion of specialty training and board certifications in PM&R and include both Saudi and Non-Saudi residents. These qualifications entitle physicians to work as a specialist in KSA depending upon the requirements laid by the Saudi Council for Health Specialties.³ The PM&R is still a developing field in KSA, and the community of rehabilitation physicians remains very small.³ The requirement of foreign trained rehabilitation physicians still persists to meet the growing rehabilitation needs of the Saudi population.^{1, 4-5} The number of trainee residents in PM&R is expected to build up gradually with the commencement of the Saudi board program, and the return of local scholars training abroad. The productivity and training quality can improve if Saudi and Non-Saudi board residents are trained on a single platform. It will not only promote a healthy competitive environment, but would also be a model for acknowledgement and recognition beyond inequity. This can help to consolidate locally trained manpower by creating better career opportunities in KSA, where there is a dire need of well-trained rehabilitation physicians. Such models can also be followed in other medical specialties facing similar challenges.

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Reply from the Author

We appreciate the response by Dr. Qureshi on our article.¹ There were some centers, which have been recognized by some accredited boards, such as the Jordanian Board of the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation of the Jordan Medical Council (JBPM&R). Sitting for this examination has many requirements including satisfying the terms and conditions of the JBPM&R with regard to rotations, and the candidate to be under an approved residency program. Not to forget in the past that the Royal College of Physicians (London) has recognized some training centers to allow their residents to sit for the Diploma in Medical Rehabilitation, and Riyadh Military Hospital was one of the centers. Some institutes also have affiliations with CPSP to obtain the Board in PM&R. It is a very good initiative, especially if it targets to increase the Saudi nationals who are board certified in PM&R. In the past, there were also some initiatives from some health institutes to be accredited as training centers for some PhD or Boards with some Colleges/Boards in India and Egypt as a split program. To my understanding, none of these initiatives was successful.

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