

# WFME Accreditation: A New Era for Medical Graduates in Bangladesh

Quality assurance in undergraduate medical education is crucial in delivering effective healthcare to a nation. The World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) sets global standards to improve basic medical education. It is now essential to achieve this accreditation for rapidly increasing number of medical colleges in Bangladesh to maintain global standards and quality of medical education. This article emphasizes the current status of undergraduate medical education, challenges in maintaining global standards, and implications of WFME accreditation in Bangladesh's future healthcare system.

### Introduction

In the current globalized world, quality assurance in undergraduate medical education is essential to ensure that medical graduates will be competent, skilled, and ethically sound to meet the expectations of national and international healthcare. The WFME sets eight key standards to improve the quality of undergraduate medical education by ensuring a standard curriculum, improving infrastructure, standardizing educational resources, faculty development, improving the assessment system, and maintaining good governance and administration.

### Background and Rationale

Until the mid-1980's Bangladesh had eight government medical colleges. With the establishment of 1<sup>st</sup> private medical college in 1986, Bangladesh experienced a rapid increase in the number of medical colleges both in the private and government sectors. Currently, we have 37 government medical colleges and 67 private medical colleges under the Ministry of Health, and also 7 medical colleges under the affiliation of the Bangladesh University of Professionals under the Ministry of Defense. While this explosion in the number of medical colleges reflects the health needs of our nation, it has also compromised the quality and uniformity of undergraduate medical education in our country.<sup>2</sup> Acknowledging this issue, in 2010, the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) informed in its website that starting from 2023 (extended to 2024 due to the

COVID-19 pandemic), all foreign doctors will need to be graduated from WFME-accredited institutes if they wish to take further postgraduate training or certification in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

### Government Response and Policy Action

Recognizing the importance of WFME accreditation of undergraduate medical education, in September 2023, the parliament of Bangladesh approved the 'Bangladesh Medical Education Accreditation Act 2023'. Under this act, the Bangladesh Medical Education Accreditation Council (BMEAC) was formed in 2024. Already, BMEAC has set 11 standards aligned with WFME standards to evaluate the medical colleges for accreditation.

### Challenges in Implementation

WFME accreditation is not an easy task to achieve. The key challenge lies in ensuring uniformity in implementation in all medical colleges of our country. Many of the private medical colleges, though, have adequate infrastructure but lack an adequate number of trained faculty and an academic hospital. On the other hand, some public medical colleges suffer from bureaucratic inertia, outdated infrastructure, and a shortage of faculty. So, to achieve WFME accreditation, it needs systemic reforms, investment in capacity building, and a shift from traditional teacher-centred methods to student-centered, outcome-based education.<sup>3</sup>

### Implications and Broader Impact

The advantages of WFME accreditation extend beyond mere eligibility for foreign certification and training. This would also increase the reputation of medical education of Bangladesh globally and would create the opportunity for academic collaboration and research. Most importantly, WFME-accredited institutions are likely to produce competent physicians capable of providing standard healthcare both nationally and internationally. The financial stability of many private medical colleges depends on foreign students' tuition fees. Failure to get accreditation will discourage foreign students from getting admitted to these medical colleges, and thus, the survival of private medical colleges will be difficult.<sup>4</sup>

## Conclusion

This pursuit of accreditation is not merely inevitable; it is long overdue. In a post-pandemic era where the vulnerability of health systems has been clearly revealed, Bangladesh must allocate resources towards the development of its future health staff. WFME accreditation is a fundamental need for achieving that objective, guaranteeing that Bangladeshi medical graduates are both internationally mobile and locally proficient, empathetic, and dedicated to the best standards of care.

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