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### Review Paper

## A Review on NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test) Aspirants Shift to Abroad: Causes and Challenges

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### ARTICLE DETAILS

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### ABSTRACT

In recent years, a significant number of Indian students aspiring to pursue medical education have opted to study abroad due to various compelling factors. This trend is primarily driven by the intense competition for limited medical seats in India, the high costs associated with private medical colleges, and the perception of superior educational quality in foreign institutions. Countries such as Russia, China, Ukraine, and the Philippines have emerged as popular destinations. However, this shift presents several challenges, including the recognition of foreign medical degrees in India, cultural and language barriers, financial constraints, and visa issues. This paper delves into the causes motivating NEET aspirants to seek medical education abroad and the challenges they encounter. By examining these factors, the paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of this trend and suggests measures to support students in making informed decisions about their medical education. To meet the issues, a balanced strategy is required. Improving India's medical school infrastructure, expanding the number of available seats, and making education more accessible can all contribute to the retention of talent. Furthermore, improving assistance and guidance to students contemplating abroad study, expediting the recognition procedure for foreign degrees, and developing international partnerships may all contribute to a more favorable climate for prospective medical students?

### 1. Introduction

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) is the gateway to securing a seat in medical colleges across India. This highly competitive examination sees over a million aspirants each year, vying for a limited number of seats in government and private medical institutions. Despite the dedication and hard work of countless students, the severe imbalance between the number of candidates and available seats has led to immense pressure and disappointment for many. Consequently, a growing number of NEET aspirants are exploring opportunities to pursue medical education abroad. Several factors contribute to this shift. The exorbitant fees of private medical colleges in India coupled with the relatively affordable tuition and living costs in some foreign countries, make studying abroad an attractive option. Additionally, the perception of superior educational

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quality, better infrastructure, and the promise of global exposure in countries like Russia, China, Ukraine, and the Philippines lure students away from India.

However, studying abroad is not without its challenges. The recognition of foreign medical degrees, cultural and language barriers, financial burdens, and visa complications are significant hurdles that students must overcome. This paper aims to explore the causes behind the increasing trend of NEET aspirants opting for medical education abroad and to examine the challenges they face in this pursuit. By understanding these dynamics, we can better support and guide students in making informed decisions about their medical careers.

## 2. Causes

### 1. High Competition and Limited Seats

- NEET is one of the toughest entrance exams in India with over a million candidates vying for a limited number of seats. In 2023, for instance, over 1.8 million students competed for approximately 80,000 medical seats.
- The fierce competition often results in many deserving candidates being unable to secure a seat, prompting them to look for opportunities abroad.

### 2. Cost of Medical Education in India

- The cost of studying in private medical colleges in India can be exorbitant, often reaching up to INR 1 crore (approximately USD 135,000) for the entire course.
- Comparatively, some foreign medical universities offer more affordable tuition fees and living expenses, making it financially viable for many students.

### 3. Quality of Education

- Many students perceive foreign medical universities, especially in countries like Russia, China, Ukraine, and the Philippines, to offer high-quality education and infrastructure.
- The availability of advanced facilities, experienced faculty, and opportunities for practical exposure attract students to these institutions.

### 4. Global Exposure and Opportunities

- Studying abroad provides students with a global perspective and exposure to diverse healthcare systems and practices.
- This international experience can be advantageous for those looking to pursue further studies or careers in different countries.

## 3. Challenges

### 1. Recognition of Degrees

- One of the primary challenges faced by students who study medicine abroad is the recognition of their degrees in India.
- Graduates must clear the Foreign Medical Graduates Examination (FMGE) or the National Exit Test (NExT) to practice in India, which can be challenging and adds an additional layer of stress.

### 2. Cultural and Language Barriers

- Adapting to a new culture and, in some cases, learning a new language can be daunting for students.
- This cultural adjustment period can impact their academic performance and overall well-being.

### 3. Quality of Education

- While many foreign universities provide excellent education, some institutions may not meet the desired standards.
- Students must thoroughly research and choose accredited and reputed universities to ensure they receive quality education.

### 4. Financial Strain

- Despite being more affordable than private colleges in India, studying abroad still requires a significant financial commitment.
- Students often face challenges in securing loans and managing living expenses in a foreign country.

### 5. Visa and Immigration Issues

- Securing a student visa and complying with immigration regulations can be complex and time-consuming.
- Any changes in the host country's immigration policies can also impact the students' stay and studies.

## 4. Conclusion

The shift of NEET aspirants to study abroad presents a multifaceted landscape of opportunities and challenges. On one hand, the intense competition and limited availability of medical seats in India drive many students to seek alternatives abroad. The

appeal of relatively lower tuition fees, better educational infrastructure, and global exposure in countries like Russia, China, Ukraine, and the Philippines is undeniable. For many students, studying abroad represents a viable and attractive pathway to fulfilling their dreams of becoming medical professionals.

However, this trend also brings significant challenges. The recognition of foreign medical degrees in India remains a critical issue, often requiring graduates to clear additional exams such as the Foreign Medical Graduates Examination (FMGE) or the National Exit Test (NExT). Cultural and language barriers, financial constraints, and visa-related issues add layers of complexity to the decision to study abroad.

To address these challenges, a balanced approach is necessary. Enhancing the medical education infrastructure in India, increasing the number of available seats, and making education more affordable can help retain talent within the country. Additionally, providing better support and guidance to students considering foreign education, streamlining the recognition process for foreign degrees, and fostering international collaborations can create a more favorable environment for aspiring medical students.

In conclusion, while studying abroad offers promising opportunities for NEET aspirants, it is essential to navigate the accompanying challenges carefully. By implementing supportive measures and informed policies, we can ensure that students make well-informed decisions and ultimately contribute to the global medical community effectively.

## 5. Recommendations

1. *Enhanced Support and Guidance*
  - Providing aspiring students with better guidance and support regarding foreign medical education can help them make informed choices.
  - Government and educational agencies should offer resources and counseling to help students navigate the complexities of studying abroad.
2. *Improving Medical Education Infrastructure in India*
  - Increasing the number of medical seats and improving the quality of education in Indian medical colleges can help reduce the number of students seeking education abroad.
  - Implementing policies to make medical education more affordable will also retain talent within the country.
3. *Strengthening International Collaborations*
  - Forming collaborations and exchange programs between Indian and foreign medical universities can provide students with global exposure without the need to study abroad for the entire duration of their course.
4. *Streamlining Recognition Processes*
  - Simplifying and streamlining the process for recognizing foreign medical degrees in India can alleviate the challenges faced by returning graduates.
  - Ensuring transparency and support in the examination and certification process will benefit the students and the healthcare system as a whole.

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