

Role of Training, Trainer and Trainee in the Future of Histopathology in Pakistan

Sir,

Histopathology has a role not only in diagnosis, but also in the management, surveillance and prediction of the prognosis of diseases. This specialty is being practiced in Pakistan in different centres with variable quality assurance and different training standards. Fellowship training of Histopathology in Pakistan is of variable standards in different training centres. Since 2011, Royal College of Pathologists have made Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP), Rawalpindi (Pakistan) a centre for Fellow of Royal College of Pathologists (FRCPath) Part-1 examination.¹ This has opened a window for candidates doing Histopathology Fellowship of the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (FCPS) training in Pakistan to enter for acquisition of degree of FRCPath, after passing FRCPath Part-1 and Part-2 examinations. However, this needs a standardized training with some improvements in the local Fellowship training of Histopathology. This improvement is required in all three limbs of the training triangle including training system, trainer and trainee.

After passing FCPS Part-1 examination, the candidate can select any branch of pathology including Histopathology for FCPS Part-2 training.² FCPS Part-2 training in Histopathology comprises 4 years. The candidates can appear in FCPS Part-2 examination after fulfilling the requirements and on passing are awarded the degree of Fellow of College of Physicians and Surgeon (FCPS) in Histopathology.³ There are about 29 centres in Pakistan recognized for FCPS Part-2 training in the subject of Histopathology.⁴ Among them, there are only a few centres where the training is up to the standard.

In the United Kingdom, there is a comprehensive training program for FRCPath Histopathology which comprises 5 years training. The candidates sit in FRCPath Part-1 after 2 years of training and FRCPath Part-2 examination in last year of their training or at the end of training. After passing the FRCPath Part-2 examination, the candidates work for another one year as Specialist Registrar (SpR) before they can apply and work independently as consultants.⁵

First year training is as Senior House Officer (SHO), which is done in Histopathology. Next 4 years training (2nd through 5th year) is done as Specialist Registrar (SpR) through a Deanery based training system in which

all the candidates have a rotational training in different regional centres, getting equal opportunity and exposure of the material and training facilities. The candidates are required to see at least 500 surgical pathology cases and 300 cytology cases (gynaecology and non-gynaecology) in the first year of training and this number increases in subsequent years. Every candidate is to perform at least 100 autopsies in 5 years.⁶ The overseas candidates after passing FRCPath examination can apply for the job of consultant through article-14 after fulfilling the requirements.⁷

After comparing and analyzing histopathology training systems of Pakistan and United Kingdom, there are few measures which can be taken to uplift the quality of histopathology training in Pakistan. This requires improvements in all the three limbs including training system, trainer and trainee. The recommendations are as under:

1. All the FCPS Histopathology trainees should get a rotational training in all the training centres of a province for equal period of time, giving them equal opportunities of exposure and training. If the training facilities are not very good in one province, the trainees of that province can be given an option for rotation to other provinces also. The College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (CPSP) should play the role of Deanery in this regard.
2. While giving accreditation to a centre for FCPS Histopathology training, it must be ensured that all these training centres should have basic facilities for FCPS training.
3. Reporting in all training centres should be according to the data sets issued by the Royal College of Pathologists which will provide the trainees a standardized method of reporting and clinicians with standardized reports for management of patients.
4. Modification in examination and marking system including viva on frozen sections, inclusion of OSPEs (management and data sets) as part of examination and change in marking system, shifting to a grading system (1-5 marks for every question) will make the examination more comprehensive and fool proof.
5. Faculty of Histopathology may be made, which should revise and update the Histopathology examination system.
6. It must be mandatory for all supervisors to participate in External Quality Assurance (EQA) schemes.
7. Supervisors should regularly be assessed by CPSP for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points gained during each year.
8. FCPS training in Histopathology is very demanding and needs a lot of hard work, so there should be an aptitude test for trainees before induction of FCPS training.

9. The trainees should be kept on a probationary period for 3 - 6 months and if during this period their performance is not up to satisfaction, their training may be terminated.

10. Record of trainees regarding participation in clinical meetings and other academic and research activities should be a part of assessment in their training years and in the final examination also.

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