

## **Editorial: The Future of Family Medicine as a Specialty in Pakistan**

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Globally, family medicine is considered the foundation of primary healthcare systems, and its significance is becoming more widely acknowledged in Pakistan. Pakistan's healthcare system is under a lot of strain due to the country's fast expanding population, diverse healthcare system, and new public health issues. Given this, family medicine is a profession with great potential to address numerous systemic problems, increase access to healthcare, and promote the patient-centered care movement. But there are many obstacles facing family medicine in Pakistan, and lawmakers, educators, and medical professionals must work together to overcome them.

Family medicine as a specialty focuses on the continuous, comprehensive care of patients of all ages and genders, incorporating social, mental, and physical health into treatment regimens. (1) Family medicine stresses the full range of healthcare, including preventive, curative, and rehabilitative treatments, in contrast to specialty medicine, which sometimes concentrates on a limited field. Better patient outcomes and increased satisfaction with healthcare services are the results of fostering long-term connections between patients and healthcare providers.

Family medicine is more important than ever in Pakistan. Alongside the persistent problems caused by infectious diseases, the nation is seeing a rise in the prevalence of chronic conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, and cardiovascular disorders. (2) Because of this dual burden of disease, family medicine may offer a comprehensive approach to healthcare. Family doctors are qualified to treat both acute and chronic illnesses, providing the continuity of care required to manage diseases over the long term, lowering hospitalization rates, and relieving the burden on specialized care. The capacity of family medicine to provide comprehensive care at the community level is one of its main advantages. In Pakistan, most healthcare resources are found in urban areas, while access to healthcare is severely limited in rural areas. By preparing doctors to act as primary healthcare providers in underprivileged communities, family medicine can close this gap. Better health condition management, more health knowledge, and a decrease in healthcare inequities can result from this. (3) Since family medicine encourages early intervention and minimizes needless referrals to specialists—two factors that are critical in a setting with limited resources like Pakistan—it has shown itself to be a cost-effective healthcare paradigm in many nations.

In Pakistan, family medicine has not yet realized its full potential. Comparing the specialty to more established fields like cardiology, orthopedics, or general surgery, it is still in its infancy and offers little training options and recognition. (4,5) Since family medicine is frequently seen as less prestigious or lucrative, most Pakistani medical graduates today opt to pursue specialist fields. This perception can be attributed to a lack of awareness about the scope and significance of family medicine among both medical students and the public.

Significant changes at several levels are required to fully achieve the potential of family medicine. First and foremost, family medicine must be included as a key subject in the medical curriculum. Providing family medicine education at the undergraduate level, exposing medical students to primary care concepts, and equipping them with the resources they need to practice in a variety of community-based settings are all part of this. To develop a committed workforce of family doctors, postgraduate training programs in family medicine should also be extended and approved by appropriate organizations. (6)

Secondly, there needs to be a shift in public and institutional perceptions of family medicine. Family physicians must be recognized as essential healthcare providers with a unique role in improving patient outcomes. The government and healthcare authorities must actively promote family medicine through public health campaigns, and policies should be implemented to encourage medical graduates to pursue family medicine as a viable career option. Family physicians can play an integral role in the implementation of Pakistan's national health policies, especially in areas like maternal and child health, preventive care, and the management of non-communicable diseases. (7)

Furthermore, the development of family medicine in Pakistan requires strong collaboration between medical institutions, health authorities, and international organizations. Partnerships with global health bodies like the World Health Organization (WHO) and regional experts can help Pakistan adapt successful models of family medicine from countries with more advanced primary healthcare systems. Learning from these models can guide the development of training programs, healthcare delivery systems, and best practices in Pakistan.

The future of family medicine in Pakistan is bright. Already family medicine is included in medical curriculum of undergraduates and training is also started by college of physicians and surgeons Pakistan (CPSP). Family medicine has the potential to be a game-changer in the country's healthcare system, ensuring that all individuals have access to affordable, quality healthcare services. By investing more in training, raising awareness, and promoting policy reforms, Pakistan can create a robust system of family medicine that will serve as the cornerstone of its healthcare system, improving the health and well-being of its population for generations to come. This editorial emphasizes the importance of family medicine in Pakistan, highlighting its potential to address the country's healthcare challenges. By improving training, promoting the specialty, and supporting policy reforms, Pakistan can unlock the full potential of family medicine as a critical component of its healthcare system.

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