

**Speech by Shri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, The President of India 13th Convocation of the INDIAN
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I deem it a privilege to have been invited to be the Chief Guest at the 13th Convocation of the Indian Academy of Medical Sciences. The Indian Academy of Medical Sciences is an association of the highest talents in the field of medical sciences. I am happy to note that the Academy is zealously striving to promote excellence in the field of medical research and education and that it plays a significant role in establishing an intellectual climate for the conduct of research in the specialized areas of medical science.

India is committed to improving the quality of life and raising the standard of living of its people. To bring about this social transformation, we have adopted that method of planned development. Development, to my mind, means more the development of human quality and mental and physical resources rather than merely of material resources. If we wish individuals to have a qualitatively better life, the basic amenities incorporated in the scheme of development must cover areas of public health and health education. Science and technology will help us in solving the formidable problems facing us in the field of health and medical care only if we use them in the proper matrix and adapt them to our needs. Fight against death and disease has today become a global concern and the scientific communities of the developing world have to collectively evolve a strategy to face the spectra of disease, under-nourishment and over population.

In recent times, medical and para-medical technologies have rapidly advanced. Few limitations exist in our capacity to diagnose and cure disease and increase the expectancy of life. Unfortunately, there is a yawning gap between what we are doing and what we are capable of doing. Large masses of Indian people have yet to be provided the basic health facilities. There is a general reluctance among medical men to develop appropriate technology and to move over to the areas where their services are needed most. Our system of medical teaching and training still remains largely hospital-based and urban-oriented. We have to effect necessary changes in our teaching and training programmes to produce medical graduates who depend more on their skill than on hospital-based facilities and also develop a community health bias. The Primary Health Centre is the foundation of our country's health policy. Medical education must primarily provide the personnel that are willing and capable of functioning effectively in and around such centres. I would like to emphasize that in all our schemes of medical education and medical relief we should never lose sight of the common man of India and his problems.

A serious dimension to the existing situation relates to the very high cost of medical treatment due to increase in the cost of drugs and hospitalization. This makes medical care more and more beyond the reach of the majority of our people. The solution to this problem lies in our effort to provide conditions which may decrease the necessity for prolonged hospitalization and drug administration. Preventive health care and detection and treatment of incipient disease could ultimately result in lower cost of medical care. This would call for an integration of preventive, promotive and curative health services at all levels of health care. I understand that promotion of knowledge on medical sciences and its practical application to the problems of national welfare is one of the objectives of the Indian Academy of Medical Sciences.

If the teaching and research in the field of medicine has to have relevance to our health needs, it would be necessary for us to develop suitable teaching materials based on our own experience and related to our conditions. The need for text books in regional languages is being keenly felt in all fields of education but particularly so in medical education. There is a great dearth of text books that are based on Indian experience with emphasis on Indian problems. Your Academy of Medical Sciences could make valuable contribution in the preparation of suitable text books, monographs and research publications.

I am gratified to note that the Government of India have introduced the facility, for the first time in our country, to enable doctors to acquire prestigious qualifications in the field of medicine and its different specialties in the country itself, and that the National Board of Examinations constituted for this purpose would be run by the administrative machinery of the Indian Academy of Medical Sciences. This is as it should be. I am informed that the Indian Academy of Medical Sciences has been striving for a long time to establish uniformly high standards of post-graduate medical training in the country and that their efforts have culminated in the above decision.

An important function which to my mind this Academy should perform is scouting of talent. The quality of medical service rendered by any community is directly related to the advances made in the field of medical research. At present a career in medical research fails to attract the best medical talent. Decisions on future careers or choice of specialty are generally taken by medical graduates immediately following their graduation. There is a great need for guidance of potential scientific talent and its profitable utilization towards national priorities. I hope that this Academy would deliberate on this subject and identify areas in the field of medical research in the context of our national needs. We need to deliberately reorientate our research efforts into fields of practical relevance and importance. A developing country like ours has to be extremely choosy in the type of research it undertakes. A lot of research being done in the country is not of immediate relevance and is of importance to the individual rather than the community. The approach need not be to curb individual interests but to utilize it in the best interests of the country.

I take this opportunity to congratulate all those who have been admitted today to the fraternity of medical scientists in the Indian Academy. These are momentous times when science and technology are adding new ideas to our thinking and knowledge every day. The country looks forward to you all to fulfill the challenging tasks that lie ahead. I wish you every success.

Jai Hind.