



## Postgraduate courses in clinical pharmacy in Pakistan

Muhammad Umair Khan

Pakistan

### LETTER TO EDITOR

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### Corresponding Author:

Muhammad Umair Khan

Pakistan

Email: umair104@yahoo.com

### LETTER

*To the Editor:* The role of pharmacist has changed from the traditional supply and procurement of medicine to a more proactive patient oriented pharmaceutical care.<sup>1</sup> In Pakistan, this transition is still in process and was augmented by the introduction of Pharm D degree in 2004. Since then the degree has become more clinically oriented and it has been assumed that the subject of clinical pharmacy has given new dimensions to the field of pharmacy and is now considered as an essence of the discipline.

Pharm D students are more inclined towards clinical pharmacy and they are very ambitious to pursue their career in a clinical setting. In view of this, a private sector chartered university has first time introduced post graduate courses in clinical pharmacy in Pakistan. These courses include MS and PhD programs in clinical pharmacy. The major objective of these courses is to meet the expanded challenges of the profession. The deserved credit must be given to Ziauddin University to take an initiative to introduce these advanced degrees to cope up with the increase demand of specialize clinical pharmacist.

The introduction of higher degrees in clinical pharmacy was a daunting task for developing countries like Pakistan as little was explored about the subject and no such expertise was available. However thorough research was carried out and it was found that Pakistan was standing at the same position as was its neighbour country about a decade ago. It was then decided to follow the same path as was chosen by its neighbour country and originate an advanced degree in clinical pharmacy with the help of pharmacologist and clinician.<sup>2</sup> This, I think, was the best option available because clinical pharmacy itself is an application of pharmacology into clinical

practice. And also this method was more suited particularly to Ziauddin University as it is attached with 300 bed hospital which makes it more convenient to run postgraduate courses in clinical pharmacy.

The curriculum for master degree include pharmacy practice, pharmacotherapeutics, pharmacoeconomics, clinical biochemistry and statistical and computer applications. These courses are being supervised by preceptors with their respective speciality. After a successful completion of these courses student will enter into research mode which is again supervised by pharmacologist with the help clinician. However PhD students have to undertake 2 optional courses along with their research projects. The minimum duration required to complete MS and PhD degrees are 2 and 3 years respectively.

However, at the same time, there is a need to focus on building up a quality and producing a graduate who is not less competent by any means than a graduate of any top ranked university. The important step that I would suggest is to include practical approaches in teaching by familiarizing the students more with the clinical setting in the form of clinical rounds. By this I mean it should not be on 'rarely' basis rather it should be considered as a mandatory attachment to award any postgraduate degree in clinical pharmacy.

Moreover, this dynamism initiated by a private sector university will also instigate other universities, especially public sector universities, to follow the same path and commence postgraduate courses in clinical pharmacy. This would of great benefit to students with low-socio economic background as the fee structure in private university is far from affordable range of many students.

Overall, I consider the launch of postgraduate courses in clinical pharmacy as fresh wave of air that has entered into Pakistan and this hopefully will begin a new era in the field of clinical pharmacy which is necessary to sustain and expand the benefits of health care provision.



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## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Authors contributed equally to all aspects of the study.

## PEER REVIEW

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## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no competing interests