

Medical Microbiology in Practice: past and current situations in Iran

Dr. Bahram Fatolahzadeh

When the past is being compared to the present, one assumes a progress unintentionally, which of course includes our society as well. Unfortunately, there are a few cases that don't follow this rule and regress instead which also involves Microbiology. Once we closely observe the outcomes, we realize the expectations of the founders of Microbiology have not been met and the results of our development should have been obvious when we claim progression.

Why wouldn't we have people like Dr. Mir Shamsi, Dr. Farajollah Shafa, Dr. Bahmanyar anymore? Why are medicine students not as enthusiastic as before to participate in class? And finally, why do the institutes which once used to be the vaccine manufacturers in the Middle East, import them now and not only stopped making new vaccines, their previous products have been banned by international organizations?

Once we contemplate what has been going on, we find out that the answer to all these questions is nothing but our own mistakes which strays from the path that the pioneers had shown us. While they fervently thought of progression in this major, we only considered our ephemeral and superficial development. They spent their life time to improve Microbiology and eventually national health. The students used to take two credits of Clinical Microbiology (in the hospital lab) at medicine school which unfortunately this vital course was cancelled by irresponsible planners and we were only on-lookers. There used to be a Clinical Microbiology department, adjacent to every Microbiology department which

admitted patients who were referred by physicians not only to diagnose their conditions, but also to educate medicine students as they personally asked for the patient's history and took the samples, prepared and submitted the results to the patient under the professors' supervision. All these centers except the Health Department were closed down and no Microbiologist ever objected. How come the students who never took a course in Clinical Microbiology and had no contact with the patients are teaching what they don't have any knowledge of as a university professor, and how can we expect a physician to interpret the results of the urine cultures? When the curricular are the same as high school, how do we expect the students to participate eagerly in the classes? Is it not retrogression? Can we as Microbiology experts exonerate ourselves where we confirmed these wrongs plans with our silence?

What's done is done and we need to find a solution for future, for those smart and talented university applicants who choose to study Microbiology, unaware of its destiny. A solution needs to be found for them so that they would not join the current unemployed Microbiology graduates. Unfortunately, those who are responsible make new rules which instead of support and amelioration of the curriculum prohibit their employment. This doesn't only hurt the graduates, but also hurts the society who has paid for their education and cannot benefit from their knowledge and skill.

Giving priority to research and publications over education to promote the professors is another plan which has caused decline in Microbiology and other majors as well. Based on these criteria, the professors focus on research and publishing papers which unfortunately has no health or medical significance. Education comes second especially in graduate studies, they forget its importance and what used to be teacher-student education has become student-student education. What has one who has graduated

*Corresponding author: Bahram Fatolahzadeh Ph.D,
Emeritus Professor
Address: School of Medicine, Tehran University of Medical
Sciences.
E-mail: fat132us@yahoo.com

from this system learned to teach it to new students as a professor-to-be or to run an institute? This is the result of what we have gained due to the above-mentioned points that when studied cautiously and

sympathetically means retrogression in comparison to the past and the global improvements especially in molecular field.