



CORRESPONDENCE

Karnataka state in India set to remove unqualified health providers from its health care system

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The Karnataka Medical Council (KMC) in Karnataka, India, has introduced a new law whereby current and newly graduated medical practitioners applying to the KMC for registration numbers to obtain their medical licences for practice will be issued smart biometric cards. For existing practitioners, these cards will be made available at the time of the renewal of their licences. Through this modernised improvement, the KMC primarily hopes to reduce the number of unqualified health providers (UHPs) operating under false licences within the state.

Upon application for a new registration or for renewal of an existing licence, the doctors' documents will be verified, fingerprints taken and identity photographs scanned and uploaded. All of this information will then be accessible via these new cards.

In India and other low-income countries, many rural, poor and underserved communities rely upon informal providers for health care due to the unavailability of trained health care workers, including doctors.^{1,2} People seek such providers for a variety of ailments, ranging from diarrhoea, cough or respiratory problems to ante- and post-partum problems, vaginal discharge and neonatal illnesses.³ These UHPs can do a great deal of harm, as they may prescribe inappropriate medications and perform unskilled operating procedures, which can prove fatal.

Another advantage of the smart cards is that the KMC can keep tabs on practising physicians, and those who have died or have left the country can be eliminated from the Council Registry at the time of licence renewal. This will provide an accurate list of currently available qualified health care providers in the state. Continuous Medical Education points will also be added to the data on the card, and if a doctor is sued or has had a complaint filed against them, the details can also be accessed via the card.

In conclusion, this step to modernise the medical system through the introduction of smart biometric cards will be beneficial for both doctors and their patients, and lead to a smoother and more transparent medical registration system.

References

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