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Beyond Borders: India's rising trend of medical education abroad

20 October 2026 | Views | By Kadwin Pillai, Director of Transworld Educare and Chairman of Kings International Medical Academy

For those planning to practise in India, the Foreign Medical Graduate Examination (FMGE) remains an important part of the journey

India’s medical education system is expanding, but the demand for medical seats continues to be much larger than the supply. For 2026-27, the National Medical Commission’s (NMC) seat matrix lists 136,939 MBBS seats across 823 medical colleges. At the same time, about 22.79 lakh students registered for NEET-UG 2026. The numbers explain why an increasing number of Indian students are looking at medical education outside the country.

Studying medicine abroad is no longer simply a choice made by students who have missed out on a seat in India. For many families, it is now one of several options considered at the beginning of the admission process. The decision, however, requires considerably more thought than comparing tuition fees between countries. Students are increasingly looking at the university, the course structure, the language of teaching, hospital exposure, internship arrangements and, most importantly, what the qualification means when they return to India.

FMGE Remains a Major Hurdle

For those planning to practise in India, the Foreign Medical Graduate Examination (FMGE) remains an important part of the journey. The recent results show why students cannot afford to treat it as an issue to be dealt with after completing their degree.

In the June 2026 FMGE, 36,300 candidates appeared and only 4,635 qualified, giving a pass percentage of 12.77%. In December 2025, 10,264 candidates qualified out of 43,933 who appeared. The figures have remained a concern for students pursuing medical education overseas.

There is no single reason behind the low pass rate. Students come from different universities and education systems, with differences in teaching methods, clinical exposure and assessment patterns. A student may complete a medical degree abroad, but that does not automatically mean they are adequately prepared for the requirements they will face on returning to India.

This is also why NMC requirements need to be understood before admission, rather than after graduation. The regulations cover areas including the duration of medical education, clinical training and internship. Recent regulatory clarifications have also placed greater emphasis on physical, in-person training in cases where online education has formed part of a

programme.

The Philippines Has Become an Important Choice

The Philippines is a good example of how overseas medical education has evolved. English is widely used in medical education, and the country has a long-established medical training system. It has consequently attracted a sizeable Indian student population.

According to an advisory issued by the Embassy of India in Manila in 2026, around 9,800 Indian students were enrolled in the Philippines, with most pursuing medical education. The advisory also highlights the importance of checking whether the institution and programme meet the requirements applicable to foreign medical graduates in India.

For students, this is an important distinction. The popularity of a destination does not by itself make every institution suitable. The university, programme structure, clinical training and registration requirements all need to be checked before a student commits several years and a substantial investment to the course.

A More Careful Approach Is Needed

The overseas medical education market is therefore entering a more mature phase. Students are asking better questions, and they need better answers before they leave India.

The immediate priority should be straightforward counselling based on facts. Students should know what the course involves, where clinical training will take place, what the internship entails, whether the qualification meets the relevant Indian requirements and what they will need to do if they want to practise in India.

India will continue to add medical colleges and seats, but the demand for medical education will remain strong. Overseas education will continue to have a role in meeting that demand. The challenge now is to ensure that choosing to study medicine abroad is based on the quality and suitability of the education, rather than simply the availability of a seat.

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