Ophthalmology: a dwindling specialty in Pakistan

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Madam Editor, Ophthalmology is a branch of medical science that deals with diagnosing and treating eye disorders. It comprises both the medicinal and surgical aspects of eye care. Medical students choose a specific field of their interest as their future specialty. It is the dream of every medical student to go far in his or her field of study and to make good progress. Some students choose Medicine while others opt Surgery. Even in surgery, some students choose General surgery, while others choose other surgical interests, such as Cardiac surgery, Gynaecology, Neurosurgery, etc. The same thing happens in the field of medicine i.e., they want to become Internists, Paediatricians, Dermatologists, Neurologists and Cardiologists. But the tendency of students to opt Ophthalmology is observed to be less in Pakistan1.

According to Aslam M, et al. (2011), only 1.7% of medical students in the public sector and 3.3% of medical students in private sector medical colleges preferred Ophthalmology.2 Another study by Hamid S et al., in 2019 conducted on the fourth and final year medical students, and house officers showed that only 3.8% of the participants were interested in Ophthalmology as a future subject of specialty, with a male to female ratio being 1:3, which is alarming as well3. The main factors influencing medical students not to choose Ophthalmology include, fewer chances of residency, prolonged duration of residency, and limited opportunities in the private sector4. Besides this, students often perceived Ophthalmology as a ‘dry subject’. The basics of the eye i.e., anatomy, histology, embryology, and physiology are also extensive and difficult to be retained for a prolonged period. Poor retention of concepts can also affect the specialty preference concerning Ophthalmology among medical students.

Though there are many benefits of choosing the field as a specialty, some being high income, less working hours and no duties in the night4. Almost all cases in

References
