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Capacity Building for the Provision of Rheumatology in Pakistan

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Introduction

There is significant shortage of physicians in most lower and middle income countries (LMICs) with a clear shortage of rheumatologists. There is also lack of other healthcare providers trained in musculoskeletal problems and rheumatic diseases in LMICs, despite the incidence of disease mirroring that of the developed world. Pakistan has a population of 207 million but only 77 rheumatologists.

In December 2019, Arthritis Care Foundation Pakistan, in collaboration with Royal Society of Medicine, UK and Royal College of Physicians, organized a three-day educational programme

Method

This educational initiative was endorsed by Pakistan Society for Rheumatology and was organized in three major teaching institutions: Services Institute of Medical Sciences, University of Health Sciences and Fatima Jinnah Medical University in Lahore. The objective was to further improve knowledge and clinical skills, increase awareness of the importance of the specialty, increase recruitment of more rheumatologists and reinforce the principles of education supervision and leadership. The Faculty included 2 rheumatologists, a musculoskeletal radiologist from the UK and rheumatologists from Pakistan. The program included lectures, panel discussion, case based interactive workshop, hands-on ultrasound workshop, dedicated session for family physicians, leadership and educational supervision sessions. The RCP medical

Results and Discussion

At least 600 participants included rheumatologists, trainees, internists, family physicians and medical students. The feedback from participants was very positive. Another survey is planned to assess long term impact.

Training for rheumatology nurse specialists and allied practitioners is planned in future projects. The program has been positively received by participants and faculty and has been demonstrated to be effective. The methodology may be applicable to similar needs in other countries.

We believe that partnerships between medical institutions in high income countries and LMICs is the way forward to raise the standard of healthcare for our patients.

