

## Teaching Medicine in Local Languages

### Why in news?

The demand for medicine to be taught in languages besides English has been made repeatedly and was reiterated recently by Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

### What is the need for regional languages in teaching medicine?

- **Linguistic dualism**- It promotes linguistic dualism since students studied in regional language upon entering a medical school find it difficult to understand concepts.
- **Doctor-Patient gap**- If a doctor communicates well in a regional language, it will help them to decrease the gap with the patient.
- **Thinking and communication**- Indian languages in higher education would improve the thinking component in an individual and probably communication too.

### Is it possible to teach medicine in a regional language?

- **Possibility**- In certain countries, medicine is taught in Spanish, German and so on.
- In the National Education Policy of 2020, there is a proposal to promote regional languages.
- A stage has come where some Greek and Latin terms have been done away with a shift to Anglicised terms.
- So, it is possible with certain modifications.
- When we say a regional language, there could be an overlap of words from different languages.
- Before opting for regional languages as the medium of instruction, there is a need to develop a standardisation tool for the curriculum through which we can easily compare and correlate things.
- **Current situation**- In India, medical students are guided by regulations from the National Medical Commission (NMC).
- As of now, students cannot completely study in the regional language because the NMC declares the medium of instruction as English.
- So, teaching in a regional language can only be supplementary in case a student does not understand something in English.

### Have there been attempts to offer medicine in Tamil?

- Some of the early efforts to translate medical textbooks into Tamil were made in Sri Lanka.
- About 10,000-12,000 technical terms were translated, standardised and handed over to the '**Sorkuvai**' scheme of the Tamil Nadu government, which is a collection of technical terms.
- Alumni associations come up with materials for students who had studied in Tamil up

to Class XII.

- There have also been some concerted efforts to teach in the regional language in the medical college which is a supplementary one.

### **What are the challenges in having medical education in local languages?**

- **Professional competence**- English is required for professional competence as it is the international language of science and medicine.
- There is also a new concept called English for Medical Purposes.
- **Uniform understanding**- Medicine is an area where we need to have uniform understanding in certain aspects across the globe where uniform nomenclature is required.
- **Training the staffs**- To train the teachers to teach in regional languages will take more time.
- **Availability of study materials**- The availability of books and materials in local languages is a serious concern.

### **What is the way ahead?**

- Interpersonal communication is important when dealing with patients where the regional language will help students.
- In terms of medical knowledge, to develop our reading skills during undergraduate and post-graduation and research, English will help us.
- As far as practice is concerned, it includes both the regional and English language.
- So, the regional language may be a supplement, whereas English is the essential language.
- Based on one's interests, regional language can be taken up as a supplement for better understanding and innovation.

### **Reference**

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/should-medicine-be-taught-in-the-local-languages/article65760417.ece>