

Medical Education In The U.S.S.R.

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THERE seems to be some confusion among some about the medical education obtaining in the USSR. This may be due to lack of information or misinformation. A short discussion on certain sectors of it is given below.

Doctor of Medicine: It is a basic medical degree. On successful completion of a 6-year medical curriculum, the University or the Medical Institute confers this degree. Every year constitutes a course. Accordingly there are six courses. Every course is divided into two semesters. Examinations are held at the end of each semester. The period of the examination is called a session. The winter session is in January and the summer session is in June. Every examinee must pass each examination.

According to subjects there are theoretical, practical and clinical portions in the examination. After the summer session of the third fourth and fifth courses every student has to undergo practical training in hospitals as a nurse Assistant to a doctor and as a doctor successively. During the entire period of the sixth course, every student has to work in the main departments under the supervision of a teacher.

Clinical Ordinatura: This is a two-year post-graduate course in any clinical subject, E.G. medicine, surgery, eye, nose, throat etc. students are admitted to this course ordinarily on the results of the MD Examinations. During the period of the course under

the supervision of a teacher, practical training is imparted in examination, diagnosis, treatment and operation of patients. Besides this students have to attend lectures on select subjects of a post-graduate standard, have to take part in clinico-pathological conferences and have to submit reports in the departmental conferences. Every student has to appear at two examinations at the end of each year in his own subject.

In some cases, however, specialities may be divided into several parts and examinations may be held separately. In these examinations there are written, viva voce and clinical parts. On completion of the course extending over a full two-year period, the concerned University or the Institute issues certificates to the successful candidates.

Doctor of Philosophy: This is a scientific degree. This degree is conferred on acceptance of a thesis that is prepared on the basis of research, indicating direction of novel solution of any given problem. In the whole of the USSR this degree is conferred only by the Supreme Attestation Commission (SAC) of the USSR based in Moscow. No University or Institute has the authority to confer this degree. The rules and regulations prescribed by the SAC in relation to the Ph. D. course are followed very strictly from the beginning to the conferment of the degree. If a university or an institute can procure necessary funds and also arrange

other facilities for conducting research, then only it can admit students to the Ph.D. course in any department provided that persons competent to be guides are available in that department. And the competence of the guide is judged by the critical prescribed by the SAC.

The initial defence takes place in the scientific conference of the department concerned. Herein two reviewers are engaged. They are Ph.D. degree-holders.

In the science conference the researcher focusses the salient features of his thesis and discussions are held thereon. The basic thing underlying the discussions is whether the thesis is sufficiently fit for the Ph.D. degree. The reviewers generally focus their attention on this basic thing and accordingly evaluate the thesis. If they advise, the thesis is revised and it is then sent to the Medical faculty of the University of the Special Scientific Council of the Institute concerned for final defence. This must be approved by the SAC for consideration of the Ph. D. thesis. It is to be mentioned here that in the scientific council all most or of the members are invariably D.Sc. degree-holders. Just a few distinguished Ph. D. Degree-holders may sometimes be there.

Meanwhile synopsis of the thesis is printed and copies of it are sent to different libraries and distinguished researchers for opinions. The Scientific Council appoints two Official Opponents. After the speeches of the

Official Opponents and other reviewers are over, it is decided through secret ballot whether the thesis is fit for the Ph.D. Degree. Only members of the scientific Council are entitled to take part in the secret ballot. If the ballot is favourable, then the thesis and other relevant papers are sent to the SAC. Everything is again examined there and is submitted for approval in the committee there. If the thesis is approved in this committee, the Ph.D. Degree is conferred.

Good results on the MD and clinical ordination courses are pre-conditions for admission to this course. After completion of the formalities regarding the passing of the test and admission, the theme of the research is determined, this theme is first placed before the department and then before the Scientific Council of the University or the Institute for approval. Things mainly considered there are whether the theme is up to date, whether it is in tune with the departmental research line, whether there is a scientific novelty therein, whether there are facilities for research in the department concerned, whether the guide is competent enough for the said theme and whether the research work can be finished within the fixed three-year period. It answers to these questions are in the affirmative and if the theme is approved by the Scientific Council, then each research student draws up his own work schedule and starts work accordingly.