EDITORIAL

Medical Technology Education — Current Trends and Future Perspectives

Abdul Hafeez Kandhro

The scope of Medical Technology (MT) is vast and continually expanding. Medical Technology encompasses a wide range of products, devices, and services that contribute to the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and management of various medical conditions.

As of today, there are more than 180 medical technology institutes in Pakistan offering four-year BSMT programme in various disciplines. With the rising number of medical technology institutions year by year, medical technology degree programmes are also facing various threats, among which, regulatory challenges are at the top.

The Government of Pakistan has recently enacted and passed the 'Allied Health Professionals Council (AHPC) Act, 2021.' This act acknowledges and classifies allied health professionals into twenty-five disciplines, which is a significant step towards recognizing the importance of these professionals in the healthcare system. The classification of these disciplines will help streamline the education, training, and practice of allied health professionals in Pakistan.

The AHPC has recognized twenty-five disciplines, which include Anaesthesia Technology (AT), Blood Banking Technology (BBT), Medical Laboratory Technology (MLT) / Clinical Laboratory Sciences (CLS); including major fields (like Haematology, Clinical Chemistry, Histopathology, Cytopathology, Microbiology, Molecular Biology, and Medical Virology), Cardiac Care Technology (CCT) including Cardiac surgery and Perfusion Technology, Surgical Technology (ST) including Operating Theatre Technology (OTT), Dental Technology (DT), Renal and Dialysis Technology (R&DT), Aesthetics and Skin Care Technology (A&SCT), Endoscopy Technology (ET), Medical Informatics (MI), Optometry and Refraction Technology (O&RT), Occupational and Speech Therapy (O&ST), Audiology and Speech Technology (A&ST), Public Health Technology (PHT), Radiography & Imaging Technology (R&IT), Radiotherapy Technology (RT), Respiratory Therapy (RT) including pulmonary function testing (PFT), Nuclear Medicine Technology (NMT), Electrocardiogram Technology (EKGT), Electroencephalogram Technology (EEGT), Podiatric Medicine, Nutrition, Physical Therapy (PT) including Orthotics and Prosthetics, Rehabilitation, Sports therapy (ST), and Psychology and Counseling (P&C)

The establishment of the AHPC in Pakistan serves several important purposes and objectives such as: Ensuring the quality of allied health services, enhancing professional standards, providing a framework for professional development, and formulating regulation for registration and licensing of AHPs. Over all, the establishment of the AHPC and the recognition of various disciplines within allied health professions provide a comprehensive framework for regulating and improving the quality of healthcare services in Pakistan. This contributes to public health by ensuring that allied health professionals are well-trained, competent, and adhere to professional standards in their practice.

COVID-19 pandemic, has highlighted the critical role of medical technology in diagnosing, treating, monitoring, and preventing the spread of infectious diseases. It also brought attention to the importance of different disciplines of medical technology in managing and responding to such global health crises including diagnostic testing both in-house and mobile services, radiological imaging, respiratory therapy and ventilator support, tele-health and remote monitoring, biosafety and biological hazards prevention, safe handling and use of personal protective equipment, vaccine development, data analytics and surveillance using artificial intelligence and machine learning tools,

Correspondence: Abdul Hafeez Kandhro, PhD., and Post doctorate in Medical Technology, Mahidol University, Thailand, Assistant Professor, IMT-JSMU, Karachi, Pakistan

Email: abdulhafeez.kandhro@jsmu.edu.pk

research and development, and biological contact tracing and monitoring. It underscores the need for continued innovation, investment, and collaboration in the field of medical technology to strengthen healthcare systems and effectively respond to future health crises.

The scope of Medical Technology is not limited to these fields. Ongoing advances and interdisciplinary collaborations are pushing the boundaries of medical technology, resulting in improved patient care, better health outcomes, and transformative changes in the healthcare industry. From my point of view, the future of medical technology education in Pakistan is expected to witness several trends that will shape the field and address the evolving needs of healthcare. Some potential future trends include:

1. Expansion of specialized Medical Technology Programmes
2. Integration of technology in education for learning
3. Interdisciplinary approach
4. Focus on research and innovation
5. Industry-academia collaboration
6. Emphasis on quality assurance and accreditation
7. Continuous professional development
8. Global perspective and collaboration

These future trends in Medical Technology education in Pakistan will aim to produce well-rounded professionals and medical technologists equipped with the knowledge, skills, and innovation mindset to contribute effectively to the healthcare industry, improve patient care, and address the evolving needs of society.

The institutes of Medical Technology need to modernize their curricula in order to engage students with the advancement of medical technology education which is vital to learn effectively and keep them motivated. Listed below are some strategies that can be useful to attract and engage students in this field:

1. Incorporate interactive teaching methods: Utilize interactive teaching methods to actively engage students including group discussions, case studies, problem-solving activities, and role-playing exercises.

2. Practical hands-on experience: Students can gain practical, hands-on experience with medical technology equipment, laboratory sessions, simulation exercises, and internships in clinical facilities, to allow them to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings.

3. Utilization of technology tools: Incorporate technology tools such as, use multimedia presentations, virtual labs, online simulations, and interactive educational platforms to enhance student engagement and provide a dynamic learning experience.

4. Connect with medical technology-related professionals: Interactions with medical technologists, researchers, and teaching professionals to share their experiences and insights can provide students with a real-world perspective, expose them to current trends and challenges in the field, and inspire them to pursue their career goals.

5. Adoptive research and innovation: Encouraging students to explore research opportunities; assigning projects that require critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation. Students should be encouraged and supported to present their research findings at conferences or publish in relevant journals to enhance their engagement and sense of accomplishment.

6. Stay updated with the latest advancements in medical technology: Keeping abreast of the latest advancements and breakthroughs in medical technology and incorporate them into the curriculum, share recent research papers, news articles, and case studies with students to generate discussions and foster curiosity about the field.

7. Provide career guidance and mentorship: Offer career guidance and mentorship programme to help students understand the diverse career paths and opportunities in Medical Technology. Connect them with alumni or professionals who can serve as mentors, providing advice, guidance, and support throughout their educational journey.

8. Create collaborative learning environments: Encourage collaboration and teamwork among students, assign group projects, case studies, or problem-solving activities that require students to work together, and fostering communication, critical thinking, and peer learning.

9. Engage in practical and relevant assignments: Design assignments and assessments that are practical and relevant to the field of Medical Technology including analyzing real-life medical cases, conducting experiments, or designing innovative solutions to address current healthcare challenges.

10. Encourage professional development: Promote continuous professional development and lifelong learning, highlight the importance of attending conferences, workshops, and webinars, and provide information about professional certifications or advanced training opportunities in the field.

By implementing these strategies, institutes of Medical Technology can create an engaging learning environment that sparks curiosity, fosters critical thinking, and prepares Medical Technology students to effectively learn and contribute to the advancements in the field.