

## PLAB- some answers - section A - results of a research study by Rxpg

We are grateful to RxPG (<http://www.rxpgonline.com>) for allowing us to present their research findings on Job situation in UK after PLAB.

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RxPG Exclusive Report - Job Situation In United Kingdom after PLAB

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RxPG site has been getting several mails every day from the visitors regarding the current job scenario in UK after PLAB. We have commissioned our editorial team to write an exclusive report for this last month and the report is now ready. Read on more to read the current trends and scenarios.

United kingdom has been an attractive destination for doctors in India seeking overseas opportunities ever since the PLAB system got simplified in May 2000. Several thousand Indian doctors have used this opportunity to work in NHS and several hundred are still in process of getting through that. But recently the trend has changed a bit and this warranted a re evaluation of the situation before taking the plunge. This report will try to clarify a few things and shatter some myths about PLAB and UK.

### 1. PLAB Exam

PLAB exam is an easy exam to pass if you compare that with the Indian PG entrances. That means one can clear PLAB after one - two months of serious preparation and reading only a few books.

## Recent Changes

Part 1 Exam: The pre and para clinical subjects have been introduced into the exam since May 2003 and GMC question bank for PLAB Part 1 exam has been updated from 2000 to about 4000 questions. Some of the new questions have been surprisingly very tough and this has resulted in a somewhat unpredictable results. The frequency of the PLAB exam has been increased and it now is held at more places. In India bangalore and hyderabad have been introduced as the new centers for the exam. GMC is now also focussing on eastern european countries so new centres have been announced in Bulgaria, Romania etc. Overall the more the frequency of the exam, the more difficult it gets later on

Myth: There has been a strong rumour recently that some medical colleges in India like Maulana Azad medical College and Madras Medical college have been exempted from PLAB 1 exam. It is not the case and GMC website doesn't state that any where.

Part 2 Exam: In December 2002 the pass percentage was 88%. In January 2003 it was 67% and has been falling ever since. At one time it was said that it is impossible to fail plab 2 exam twice, now you can meet several third timers in Eastham, London - the hub of plabbers. It could be partially because every kind of student is now coming for plab 2 exam, but there is a definite increase in stringency of the passing criteria. Overall it is a highly unpredictable exam and anybody can fail on a bad day. RxPG team came even came across toppers who failed plab 2, inspite of excellent scores in IELTS, while researching for this article.

## Coachings

There has been a mushrooming of coachings and books for PLAB exam in the last one year. Every one is running after the money that this mad rush for plab is generating. In fact in Eastham, London - the hub of plabbers, the economy of the local area is dependent only on plabbers. Some five hundred students from India arrive to UK for plab every month. When you count people from other countries, the figure goes into thousands. RxPG will recommend not to go in for the new and experimental courses and books, although they might be cheap. The risk of failing in PLAB 2 far outweighs the petty 200 pound you will save in with a cheaper course. If one fails in plab 2 then one might have to wait for at least 6-9 months before getting the next date. At this stage you

are so into the plab trap that your mental and monetary peace is invariably lost . A few people think that if they fail in plab 2, then they will come back to India and do something else before reappearing. This is usually counter productive for the next attempt. The fact is one has to stay in eastham, do group studies, do clinical attachments. Only then you can think of passing it in next attempt. Returing to India will cost you same in the airfare as you will spend while staying in UK. Eastham is one of the cheapest places to stay in London and options for all kinds of budgets are available.

RxPG Recoomends:

- Dont do the five day or three day courses. You need longer to orientate your self, however confident you might be.
- Try to stay in Eastham. Other places are expensive and you wont find such a large pool pf labbers anywhere else.
- All coachings are bad, but try to go in for the one the majority goes !
- Mock exams for PLAB 2 are a MUST. Dont touch a coaching without that.
- Dont fall in trap of new and cheaper books for PLAB exams. Read what the majority reads. Dont forget to do past papers of plab for part one as the repetition is from 10-25% (refer First Aid for PLAB by Tyagi Vidyarathi - Jaypee Publications in India, Blackwell Science Publications in UK and USA, Available on Amazon.com)

Basically minimise your risk in other things as plab exams themselves are very risky. Remember ANY BODY can fail in any step - it doesnt matter whether you are a medicine PG from India or was a topper of your college. You need to visit eastham to see such cases.

Clinical Attachments (Observerships)

The necessary evil. You need clinical attachments to get the local references and these references will count once you get shrtlisted for any job. In 2001 the concept of clinical attachments was so rare to the hospital that most of them used to give such plabbers a free accomodation in the hospital premises. It stopped gradually in 2002. Now there are so many clinical attaches all over the UK that in many of the hospitals they have started charging for that. Now you pay around £50 a week for the attachments. Some palces conducts

interviews for the attachments. Some places have stopped taking that attachees completely. The situation is so bad that one can find upto three to four clinical attachees with a single consultant. In most of the hospitals who still take clinical attachments , there is a three to four month waiting list !

## Jobs

Trust doctors: The latest NHS exploit. The NHS has realised that the supply is now far exceeding the demand. So they have devised new ways to exploit such doctors. Trust doctor is a new position that technically is for overseas doctors only. It is a NON TRAINING post in which you work on a work permit and not permit free training and people take it as they have no alternative or are waiting for training SHO jobs to happen to them. Usually the difference between trust doctor post and SHO post is that of a House Job and PG seat in India. So even if you do trust doctor job for two years, you are at square one. But even these trust doctor posts are competed for fiercely and there are so many Indian post graduates in UK (Who cleared PLAB in 2000 or 2001 in first year PG and are now in UK after finishing their PGs), that a fresh graduate stands a minimal chance in Interviews. Shamelessly Hospitals are advertising even jobs like Night Trust Doctors (who will work only at nights) and Trust doctor rotations (who will be trust doctor for three years and then get no extension of visa as he/she has failed to show an objective progression in their educational status in UK). One is not allowed to sit for most of the royal colleges exam's second parts until and unless that person do a training post in UK.

Shortlistings: Hard to come by as for every post there are 500-600 applications. Even in interviews they call upto 50 people for 3 posts (if they are training posts). PRHO jobs (an equivalent of internship) are also fiercely competed for and RxPG team came across a couple from India who has done PG and after that four years of senior residency in India and are doing PRHO jobs in UK. Locums jobs are hard to come by before you are not registered with GMC (limited registration is done only after starting your first job), as most of the locum agencies will refuse to find any job for you before it. You are looking for anything between 1 day to 1 year before getting your first job, usually the latter period.

Second Job: A substantial proportion of people who got first job last year haven't got their second job. This new finding by RxPG team is shocking as everybody thinks that only getting the first job is difficult. Locums are unreliable and are not available all the time when you are unemployed. Plus it is too much strain for you to move around the country doing a day or two everywhere with no permanent place to stay.

Myths:

1. Psychiatry is with lots of job opportunities.

It was before 2001 when nobody used to apply for it. Now it is the most fought after job as people from any field of specialisation apply also for psychiatry thinking it is easy to get by. So in psychiatry upto 1000 applications for one post is not a strange thing.

2. UK has so many jobs that every doctor from India can be accommodated.

It is a myth propagated by Indian newspapers. In fact there are limited number of seats. UK has recently doubled the intake of its medical schools, so in few years it won't be available either. China has introduced English in its medical colleges, so they will compete with Indian doctors in few years for overseas posts.

RxPG Editorial Team:

We think that you might find the above article very negative about the scenario in UK. But we considered it to be our duty to make you aware of the ground reality in UK before you spend your valuable money and time here. Anyway any opinions and differences can be posted in the comments section below. It would be morally very encouraging for us as we did this voluntarily for the great RxPG site. The only driving force for us was that this article will be read by 2000 something students on RxPG site and could be of some help to them. We will try to reply your questions about this article in the PLAB forum in RxPG where also we are posting a copy of it.

Thanks

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