



9-2021

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Recommended Citation

Javed, Iram (2021) "Pediatric Neurology in Pakistan: Past, Present and Future," *Pakistan Journal of Neurological Sciences (PJNS)*: Vol. 16 : Iss. 3 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://ecommons.aku.edu/pjns/vol16/iss3/6>

PEDIATRIC NEUROLOGY IN PAKISTAN: PAST ,PRESENT AND FUTURE

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Date of submission: April 28, 2021 **Date of revision:** September 15, 2021 **Date of acceptance:** September 22, 2021

The global burden of Pediatric Neurological disorders is enormous in South Asia¹. According to a recent report , 49% of our total population comprises of children². Burden of Pediatric Neurological disorders in Pakistan is increasing substantially although exact figures are not available, but this highlights the need to develop more expertise and to train more and more Pediatric Neurologists to cope the situation. At present only a dozen of Pediatric Neurologists is available to serve the whole country. Pediatric Neurology has emerged as a relatively newer subspecialty in most of developing countries but for the past few decades, its recognition and worth as separate entity has been increasing both in terms of clinical work as well as training perspective.³ Pediatric Neurology is a multidisciplinary subject with involvement of many other ancillary departments like Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics ,Child Adolescent Psychiatry, Pediatric Neurosurgery, Physical and Rehabilitation services, Neurogenetics and Neuroradiology. When it comes to Pediatric Neurology services in Pakistan, its foundation stone has been laid by Professor Nazir Malik in central Punjab and Professor Mutloob Azam in North of Punjab way back in 1980's followed by Professor Shahnaz Ibrahim in Agha Khan University and Professor Tipu Sultan in Children Hospital & University of Child Health Sciences Lahore , have contributed significantly to recognition and development of Pediatric Neurology in Pakistan by their untiring efforts. Fellowship in subject of Pediatric Neurology was first recognized by College of Physicians & Surgeons (CPSP) in Agha Khan University in year 2011. Currently there are only three CPSP recognized centers in Lahore, Multan and Karachi which are providing their services for formal Pediatric Neurology Training. Another budding Pediatric Neurology Center is in Children Hospital Faisalabad which is in process of recognition by CPSP for training in the subject of Pediatric Neurology. Currently the graduating fellows, although very few, but are providing their services in provinces like ,Punjab, Sindh, KPK but Baluchistan and Gilgit Baltistan are still devoid of Pediatric neurologists. Most of the above mentioned, Pediatric Neurology training centers are providing comprehensive diagnostic facilities namely Neurophysiology services like EEG, including Long term Video EEG Monitoring system, Polysomnography, NCS /EMG, Evoked potentials, Neuroradiology and management facilities namely Plasmapheresis for Acquired CNS demyelinating disorders and other Autoimmune disorders like Myasthenia Gravis and GBS and ketogenic Diet for Drug resistant epilepsy and molecular genetic testing (whole Exome Sequencing) for various Inherited Neurological disorders in research collaboration with University College London. Vagus nerve stimulation has been recently introduced in Pakistan. Due to high rate of consanguinity in our country, there are many Inherited Neurometabolic disorders which distinctly present in Pediatric age group and many of them are treatable conditions and leads to good outcome if rightly diagnosed and managed on time. So, there is dire need of developing fully equipped neurogenetic and neurometabolic specialties along with all the required expertise.

Pakistan Child Neurology Society was established in 2008 and actively involved in international collaborations and in arranging conferences, various public awareness seminars , workshops, teaching courses and community outreach programs and contributing significantly to enhancing awareness not only amongst the physicians but also among the community.

EVENTS:

Events organized by CNS Pakistan in collaboration with PPA neurology expert group.

First Pediatric Neurology conference was held in 2009 and up till now 12 Pediatric Neurology Conferences have been successfully held country wide .

FUTURE ENDEAVORS:

To develop national registry of childhood Epilepsy and Pediatric stroke .

To develop national registry of Neurometabolic disorders.

To develop national newborn screening program of Neurometabolic Disorders.

To develop national program of premarital screening of various untreatable inherited neurological disorders like spinal muscular atrophy and untreatable neurodegenerative brain disorders.

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