

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

FORTY YEARS' HISTORY OF PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION IN IRAN

While physical modalities and therapeutic exercise have been used traditionally in Persian medicine, some rehabilitation issues have also been discussed, in particular, in *The Canon of Medicine* by Avicenna (980–1037). For example, the recommendation of long-term exercise for weak limbs (1), the benefits of moderate-intensity exercise, and his concept of pain (2). Modern rehabilitation medicine practice in Iran dates back to 1951 with the participation of physicians in the military and public health systems (3). Physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) was introduced into the academic health system with the education of medical students in Shiraz University in 1967 (4) and Tehran University in 1971 by physiatrists who supported the education of medical students in this field. Soon afterwards, Shafa Yahiaian Rehabilitation Hospital was set up in Tehran and quickly became well-known internationally as an outstanding inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation centre. The Iranian Society of PM&R was established in 1973. After the Iranian revolution Shiraz University of Medical Sciences became the pioneering participant in education. In 1979, just at the start of the Iran–Iraq war, the first residency training was set up (3). The Iranian Board of PM&R was established in 1982. Residency programmes were subsequently established in other areas, mainly by graduates of this department, and now include seven departments, training approximately 20 residents annually through a 3-year programme after medical school and the fulfilment of 2 years' general practice. PM&R residency positions are now among the most highly competitive positions. A 1-month elective programme for medical interns

at Shiraz and Tabriz University and short courses in other universities have increased the popularity of this field with young physicians.

In private practice, PM&R wards have been set up in the most reputed hospitals and have a substantial role in the introduction of PM&R into the healthcare system.

Fewer than 250 physiatrists are currently practising in Iran, which has a population of 70 million. However, this specialty is growing rapidly in different fields.

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