

## Editorial

### **TRAVEL NOC FOR PHYSICIANS: WHOM FOR? WHAT FOR?**

Presently, a physician planning even a short visit abroad has to fulfill the following obligations:

- (a) Obtain an NOC (No objection Certificate) from his parent institution where he is working.
- (b) Execute a prescribed Rs. 50,000/- bond.
- (c) Obtain an NOC from the Health Ministry.
- (d) Obtain an NOC from the Cabinet Division if the visit is official.
- (e) Obtain an NOC addressed to the State Bank to have his papers processed irrespective of whether the ticket is being purchased locally or coming from abroad and irrespective of whether any foreign exchange is desired or not.
- (f) To ensure that he returns within the prescribed period on the NOC or face a forfeiture of the bond money and departmental action.

From personal experience and those of others one can safely say that if one wishes to complete the formalities in good time for travel, one should initiate the paper work and the reminders and the long distance phone calls no less than 4-6 months ahead of the possible trip. One should also be prepared for a last minute flight to the offices where this paper work is done and have his local flight reservation made in advance lest such an occasion arises! The farther away in the country one is from the controlling offices, the earlier should such preparations be made.

Judging from the elaborate and impressive amount of paper work that is involved, all this exercise must obviously be playing a major role in checking the brain drain affecting our society!



*Sarcasm aside, it is no state secret that physicians whose names occur in conscription lists disappear from the country, physicians in postgraduate training rarely complete their jobs and disappear overseas. Even physicians against whom criminal proceedings are going on in the courts of the country, disappear at will from the country.*

*Who then applies for these NOC's? Who then patiently goes through the mill of paper-work, the reminders, the phone calls, the pleas and the last minute travels? It is the honest and conscientious physician who patriotically (or is it stupidly?) travels on a Pakistani passport which honestly declares that he is a physician. It is the physician who is making desperate efforts to undertake, at personal expense and loss of practice, a training programme or attend an international conference or to read a paper at a conference, or go as a medical attendant of a patient or for a personal trip. But most importantly, he is a responsible and law abiding person who is going abroad for a short and definite purpose and plans to return to the country not because of a measly bond he has filled but because he is in an entirely different category and his intent for travel different.*

*We have here a perfect example of how our elaborate plans on paper back-fire and defeat the purpose they were suppose to serve, cause inconvenience and become a source of dissatisfaction and soreness for the affected persons. In my own short stay in the country since return back home, the two occasions I have had to go through this rigamarole have been the only two occasions when the thought of re-emigrating from my country crossed my mind.*

*Please then, when the NOC's and bonds cannot keep those from leaving for whom they were designed and end up frustrating and making sore those who are coming back anyway—why then this exercise in futility?*

— THE EDITOR