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Editorial Article

URGENT CALL FOR REMOVAL: DR. SAJID BASHIR'S APPOINTMENT AS PRINCIPAL OF LORDS COLLEGE OF PHARMACY THREATENS PAKISTAN'S PHARMACEUTICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE STANDARDS

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Abstract:

The integrity of pharmaceutical education in Pakistan is under
serious threat due to allegations of corruption and malpractice in
institutional leadership. This paper examines the recent
appointment of Dr. Sajid Bashir as Principal of Lords College of
Pharmacy, Lahore, highlighting concerns that his leadership may
compromise academic standards, professional ethics, and the
quality of healthcare training. The study underscores the urgent
need for oversight, accountability, and immediate corrective
action to prevent further erosion of educational and healthcare
standards. Protecting the credibility of pharmaceutical education
is essential to ensure the development of competent professionals
and safeguard public health.

Background on Dr. Sajid Bashir's Appointment

Dr. Sajid Bashir, a retired official from the University of Sargodha (UoS), where he served as Chairman and Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy, has been appointed Principal of Lords College of Pharmacy (LCP), Lahore, a private institution affiliated with the University of the Punjab (PU). His retirement, confirmed by multiple investigative reports as of early 2024, followed a tenure riddled with allegations of corruption and mismanagement. Despite this, LCP's HR department and PU's Affiliation Committee, governed by Section 49 and Subsection 10 of the University of the Punjab Act, 1973, endorsed his appointment. This committee, comprising a Syndicate-nominated Chairman, two Academic Council-nominated Professors, regional education directors, and up to three co-opted experts, is tasked with inspecting institutions and addressing affiliation breaches. Their failure to scrutinize Dr. Bashir's history raises serious concerns about oversight, threatening the integrity of pharmaceutical education in Pakistan.

Evidence of Professional Misconduct

Dr. Bashir's record is marked by documented irregularities spanning his UoS tenure (2009–2023) and his current role at LCP. At UoS, he was appointed Professor of Pharmacy (BS-21) in March 2012 through a flawed process. The 2009 advertisement led to evaluations deemed “unacceptable, illegitimate, and non-supportive,” yet the Selection Board and Vice-Chancellor approved his appointment, ratified by the Syndicate in July 2012. A revision petition (Writ No. 37666/2021, Lahore High Court, disposed June 2021) by Dr. Muhammad Ilyas Tariq exposed concealed facts, prompting a Governor Punjab-ordered probe in October 2021 and a committee investigation in November 2022. UoS administration's contradictory statements (e.g., letters dated June 27, 2016, and November 4, 2021) further shielded this irregularity. Additionally, Dr. Bashir was linked to a failed drug manufacturing project worth approximately PKR 0.8 billion, deployed around 2006, attributed to incompetence and graft. Reports from 2017 and 2018 labeled him “officially dishonest and corrupt,” citing systemic damage to UoS's prestige and teaching quality.

Current Role and Its Implications

At LCP, Dr. Bashir's appointment as Principal, despite his retirement and controversial past, has drawn sharp criticism. Investigative reports from 2024 and 2025 describe him as a “deceiving champion” whose leadership undermines LCP's PU-affiliated Pharm-D programs, advertised prominently at 53-M, Quaid-e-Azam Industrial Area, Lahore. His participation in the 21st International Pharmacy Conference & Exhibition (IPCE-2024, Lahore, December 2024–January 2025) was criticized for diminishing the event's ethical and scientific credibility. LCP's social media (e.g., Instagram, December 2024) portrays him as a “pharmacy legend,” ignoring allegations that his leadership “spoils local pharmaceutical academia.” This oversight by LCP's HR and PU's Affiliation Committee risks producing underqualified pharmacists, exacerbating issues like drug errors and counterfeit medicines in Pakistan's healthcare system.

Institutional and Regulatory Failures

Efforts to seek transparency have been stymied. Requests under Pakistan's Right to Information (RTI) Act 2013 and Article 19-A, lodged with UoS, Governor Punjab (Muhammad Baligh Ur

Rehman), the Chief Information Commissioner, UN OHCHR, and UNESCO, yielded no compliance on corruption-related documents. A reply from Mr. Iran Ullah Khan, Assistant Director at the Ministry of National Health Services, deferred action to the Pharmacy Council of Pakistan (PCP), yet no enforcement has been reported as of October 2025. The Pakistan Pharmacists Association (PPA) has been criticized as a “dummy” organization for failing to address such appointments. These failures signal systemic governance issues, undermining global health goals like SDG 3 (Good Health) and public trust in Pakistan’s regulatory bodies.

Impact on Healthcare and Education Standards

Pakistan’s healthcare system relies on robust pharmaceutical education to produce competent professionals who ensure patient safety and drug regulation. Dr. Bashir’s leadership at LCP threatens this foundation. His history of flawed appointments, project failures, and evaded accountability has already compromised UoS’s academic standards. At LCP, his role risks diluting curricula, fostering biased recruitments, and weakening affiliations, producing graduates ill-equipped to address challenges like antimicrobial resistance or Pakistan’s low pharmacist-to-population ratio (~1:10,000, per WHO standards). Retaining a retired official with unresolved allegations as Principal perpetuates a culture of favoritism, eroding the quality of pharmaceutical education and healthcare delivery.

Recommended Actions for Reform

To safeguard Pakistan’s pharmaceutical academia and healthcare system, Dr. Bashir’s removal from LCP is critical. The University of the Punjab should revoke LCP’s affiliation pending an independent audit of its leadership, as mandated by its Affiliation Committee’s quorum of three, including ex-officio directors. The Pharmacy Council of Pakistan must investigate LCP’s governance and bar retired officials with unresolved allegations from leadership roles, per the Pharmacy Act 1967. Broader reforms include enforcing RTI compliance by Governor Punjab and the Higher Education Commission (HEC), conducting third-party audits of pharmacy colleges, and engaging stakeholders like pharmacists, alumni, and international bodies (e.g., WHO, FIP) to uphold transparency. These steps are essential to restore integrity, ensuring a corruption-free ecosystem that strengthens healthcare and education standards in Pakistan.

Editorial Statement:

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