

NEED FOR ETHICS IN UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION- THINKING AT DIFFERENT TANGENTS!!!

Law of Moses have beautifully emphasized the moral code of conduct as a part of Ethics. "Providing dignity and respect to every human life" is the foremost responsibility of a doctor or a physician. Also, the moral integrity with diligence and a positive doctor-patient relationship full of mutual trust form important aspects of ethical principles.

Unfortunately, the situation of mob agitation and violence against doctors has gone from bad to worse over the last decade or more. The deficiencies in the system, be it hospital administration or the defective government policies including meagre funding make the present state pitiable. The tragedy is that the brunt of this violence is borne by doctors who are the cream of educated class of a society. The sensationalism elicited by the media curse makes it all worse.

Is it to do with the changing fabric of society including mobocracy and frequent lynching or with a greater competitive world where cut throat competition fuels unethical practices? Or is it only that the 'Training on Professionalism and Ethics during college days is not proper- that leads to all this? Whether we as facilitators, are ideal reflections of a perfect role model for our students? Are we personally implementing the idealism of a professional and ethical behaviour? The actual problem needs to be addressed in the shortest possible time.

Medical students/interns being novice at the stage, though try to put in efforts in regard to the day to day hospital ruckus but are unable to perform it proficiently.

The first and foremost reason for students not prepared to deal with such incidences is the lack of sensitization of students in regard to principles of

ethics, especially beneficence and non-maleficence. They are not trained to garner empathetic and effective communication skills. They have never been formally taught professionalism, ethics and not trained for developing such soft skills. Basically, they lack competency in affective domain because that is not a formal part of our existing curriculum. They are neither being taught nor being assessed for the same. Lack of inculcation of these principles can surely lead to a vicious never-ending cycle. Henceforth, affecting the society as a whole.

To inculcate such skills in our students and interns, professionalism and ethics along with soft skills development should a part of MBBS curriculum. Students should be taught and assessed for the same. Competency based medical education (CBME) can be the answer to this problem with more field work and Workplace based assessment (WPBA) for developing desired competency in our students. Truly necessary objectives to develop a better doctor-patient relationship are - inculcating a sense of accountability in a student with his/her every single act; generating the importance of delivering information regarding prognosis and most importantly, a measure of patient satisfaction as an indispensable pre-requisite for a student's competency. Role modelling by senior faculties is another important indirect way with which such skills can be taught and inculcated in our students as students always look up to their teachers and seniors and follow them. Mock drills should be conducted for the students so that they know their roles in the actual situation of violence, if arise so. Reverse conditioning can be extremely helpful whereby these issues are discussed with the students by making them understand the gravity of situation by putting them in patient's/attendants' shoes. A basic sense of respect

for another human being is the key!!

The training programmes for both faculty and students are important pre-requisites as there may be a mutual deficit as far as principles of professionalism and ethics are concerned.

Dealing with the human tissues and cadavers are also serious concerns and students need to be made aware regarding importance and meaning of cadaveric oaths and ethical principles in dealing with human tissues with respect.

We need to think at different tangents. 'Professionalism and Ethics' shall be made a part of under graduate and post-graduate exam to validate students' learning in the desired context. Also, faculty training and evolving our assessment techniques to evaluate affective skills should be mandatory. Incorporating the topics in the curriculum with a well-defined separate timeline can do wonders.

Address for correspondence:

Dr Reshu Gupta, (ACME)

Member, Medical Education Unit

Assistant Professor, Physiology

RUHS College of Medical Sciences, Jaipur (Raj)

Email: reshugpt@gmail.com