



Ethics and Professionalism in Medical Practice

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In the present era of materialism where everyone is in the race of earning by all illegal means what so ever possible, keeping aside all the ethical principles and professionalism, it becomes mandatory to throw some light on this subject. In the field of medicine it is essential to maintain these two principles as it involves in dealing with patients life, thus making it more pertinent to discuss this issue in detail with special reference to medical profession. Nowadays we find a trust deficit between patients and doctors resulting in violence, patient doctor conflicts and medico legal issues probably because we are concentrating less on this issue. In most of the medical colleges of the country medical ethics is not taught as a part of curriculum as there is an old dictum that "Ethics are caught but not taught". This seems to be the need of the hour that medical ethics and professionalism may be taught as a subject and included religiously as a part of curriculum during medical course. At the outset let us define what do we mean by ethics and professionalism.

Ethics

The definitions of ethics vary from person to person or from place to place. Ethics is defined as the system of moral principles that govern the conduct of an individual or a group of individuals and according to which human actions are judged as right or wrong, good or bad It is broadly divided into three categories:

- Meta-ethics that seek to understand the nature of ethical properties, statements, attitudes and judgments.
- Normative ethics investigate the set of questions that arise when considering how one ought to act. Normative ethics are distinct from meta-ethics because they examine standards for the rightness and wrongness of actions;

- Applied ethics means the application of moral standards in various practical fields like health care (bioethics), business (business ethics), environment (environmental ethics), etc.

Bioethics

This is the division of applied ethics that helps in defining, analyzing, and resolving ethical issues that arise from the provision of health care or the conduct of health-related research.

Clinical (medical) ethics

It is the branch of bioethics that is related to the identification, analysis, and resolution of moral issues that arise in the health care of individual patients.

Research ethics

This is the branch of bioethics that is related to the identification, analysis, and resolution of ethical issues that are encountered before, during, and/or after the conduct of health-related research, specifically on humans (or animals).

Public health ethics

This is the branch of ethics that is related to the identification, analysis, and resolution of ethical issues that are encountered in the conduct of public health interventions and/or research on a large-scale population.

Bioethics is important because it helps us in answering three main questions that are usually encountered in health care provision, which are as follows:

- Deciding what we should do which are morally right or acceptable decisions),

- Explaining why we should do it (justification of our decision in moral terms), and
- Describing how we should do it (the way or manner of our response in which we act on our decision).

Professionalism

Professionalism in general means the skill or behaviour that goes beyond an ordinary man would be behaving in a more formal or business-like manner. In medical Profession it means approach and duties of a doctor towards his profession, his patients, families of patients/attendants, his own colleagues and staff and duty towards community. A profession requires the acquisition of and application of knowledge and technical skills shared together by commitment. It tells us about how best to organize and deliver health care to the patients as the doctor has a lot of role and responsibility in the society in patient care, disease control, teaching his colleges (Students and paramedics).

Role of a doctor

1. A doctor has to be A Medical Expert, i.e. physicians integrate all of the doctor's roles, applying medical knowledge, clinical skills, and professional attitudes in their provision of patient-centered care.
2. He has to function effectively as consultants, integrating all of their roles to provide optimal, ethical, and patient-centered care.
3. Has to establish and maintain clinical knowledge, skills, and attitudes appropriate to their practice -Has to perform a complete and appropriate assessment of a patient.
4. Must use preventive and therapeutic interventions effectively.
5. Must Seek appropriate consultation from other health professionals, recognizing the limits of their expertise.

As collaborator

He has to act as a collaborators, physicians effectively work within a health care team to achieve optimal patient care. He has to Participate effectively and appropriately in an inter professional health care team; Has to effectively work with other health professionals to prevent, negotiate, and resolve inter professional conflict.

As health educator

Physician should share his medical knowledge with his patients in a language they understand and a way that is culturally accept-

able to the patients; the aim is to keep them healthy in the future, not just to cure them from their current illness. He should communicate effectively with their patients to convey medically relevant information in an appropriate way; He should develop his personal communication skills through attending training and through self-development and practice.

As manager and planner

Physicians are integral participants in health care organizations, organizing sustainable practices, making decisions about allocating resources, and contributing to the effectiveness of the health care system. They should Serve in administration and leadership roles, as appropriate.

As researcher/scholar

As scholars, physicians demonstrate a lifelong commitment to reflective learning, as well as the creation, dissemination, application, and translation of medical knowledge. Maintain and enhance professional activities through on going learning.

As communicator

As Communicators, physicians effectively facilitate the doctor-patient relationship and the dynamic exchanges that occur before, during, and after the medical encounter. They should develop rapport, trust, and ethical and therapeutic relationships with patients and families; and should have an effective oral and written information about a medical encounter.

As health advocate

As Health Advocates, physicians responsibly use their expertise and influence to advance the health and well-being of individual patients, communities, and populations. Doctors should respond to individual patient health needs and issues as part of patient care.

From a very humane view point, all people are to be treated kindly; your colleagues and your patients are not an exception. Ethically, you are obliged to fulfil certain duties: i.e. not to harm, to do only good, not to interfere with others' lives without their voluntary informed acceptance, and to be fair to them. Our Profession is to heal and a right healing has to be defined by scientific and clinical evidence. A clinical judgement is equally important. We as medical professionals must work with conscientiousness, dedication, ethics and professionalism so that the respect and honour which has been lost over years due to some unethical practices by some persons, thus polluting the whole system, is retrieved back in the society and patients start posing their faith and trust in doc-

tors . This is a high time to introspect, confess, realize and change; before we are looked down upon and abandoned by the society. Let us pledge to get back the lost title of “Messiah/cream of society and saviours of humanity” [1].

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