EDITORIAL

Medical Professionalism... Need of the Day

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The commitment of healthcare professionals to individuals of society in order to fulfill their needs related to health and fitness by demonstrating ethical practices, abiding by profession-led rules and maintaining high personal standards of behavior is called medical professionalism [1].

Different nations have different professional attributes and values which varied greatly therefore it is difficult to describe a single globally accepted definition of medical professionalism. The values of professionalism are not the same for all societies; therefore each society needs to customize the values according to its cultural perspectives [2].

The field of medicine is an art based on the science of specialized knowledge which not only involves the practice of evidence-based information but also demonstrates trust, compassion & altruism with an intention to provide selfless services to the members of the community.

During the last four decades, an exceptional modification has been observed in the field of medicine. Rapid progress in this field has strongly been reinforced lately by the better ways of communication established between health care providers throughout the world [3]. The health care industry has become the corporate sector with the growing involvement of pharmaceutical industries, technological forces, involvement of governments and various businesses linked with this sector. This commercialization has revolutionized the basics of professionalism among caregivers [4].

Pakistan is a developing country and the practices of medicine over here are still trapped with the traditional patient-centered approach. A lack of infrastructure in the healthcare sector and problems faced by the doctors adversely affects the patient-doctor relationship. Prolonged working hours; low salary structure and unfavorable working environment are key elements that negatively impact the professional attitudes of doctors in our part of the world [5].

Now, what's the need of the day, and how medical professionalism can be inculcated in the medical practice? In my opinion, there's a dire need of revolutionizing the concept of traditional professionalism into modern professionalism. This can be achieved by taking the perspective of people present in the community at large which is their expectations of the doctors being an advocate for patients, demonstrating empathy and altruism and keeping the moral values while dealing with the sufferers [6].

It is deplorable nowadays that medical colleges and universities which play a pivotal role not only in introducing the students to the art and science of medicine but also in making them an individual who is able to empathize with and comfort patients are failed to develop this culture of professionalism and humanism among them. Empathy and tolerance are key factors in professionalism but sadly they are not being taught nor tested in the years of undergraduate or postgraduate medical education.

There's a need to develop a curriculum in order to produce doctors who are committed to the essentials of professionalism *i.e.* they must be altruistic thereby keeping the patient's benefit above their interest, responsible to give quality care, advocating the well being of not only their patients but the community at large and must be accountable for their actions [7]. These principles can be taught but not in the classrooms rather than students perceive and imitate the professional behavior of their seniors, in the wards, hallway and even cafeteria, thereby students observe them getting reinforced in the real-life settings of the hospital.

I, being in the field of educating undergraduate medical students for a period of over ten years, want to emphasize that the practices of professionalism shall not remain within the boundaries of seminaries but they need to be disseminated and modeled everywhere in the culture and social practices of health care vicinities. It is of great importance that every individual health care provider needs to promote and practice professionalism and maintain the integrity and dignity of humans coming in contact. Being a medical professional, one should always strive to maintain high standards of ethics, practice moral values & accept the responsibility of self-regulation and accountability.

"The practice of medicine is an art, not a trade; a calling, not a business, a calling in which your heart will be exercised equally with your head".

Sir. William Osler

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