



Doctor-Patient Relationship: National Doctor's Day Special Editorial

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The National Doctors' Day is celebrated to recognize the contributions of physicians to individual lives and communities. The date may vary from nation to nation depending on the event of commemoration used to mark the day. In India the National Doctors' Day is celebrated on July 1 to honour the legendary physician and the second Chief Minister of West Bengal, Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy who was born on July 1, 1882 and died on the same date in 1962. India has shown remarkable improvements in the medical field and July 1 pays a perfect tribute to all the doctors who have made relentless efforts towards achieving this goal irrespective of the odds.

Once treated as Gods, the doctors being regarded as one of the noblest professionals are facing a hard time nowadays. The Relationship between Doctors-and-Patients has been challenged and questioned recently whereas in the past, no such question was raised against these generous services and now the whole nation has experienced a rift in Doctor-Patient Relationship.

The ancient Ayurveda physician Charaka once said, "A good physician nurtures affection for his patients exactly like a mother, father or brother. The physician having such qualities gives life to the patients and cures their diseases." Years ago, patients were ignorant about their conditions thus solely relying on their doctor.¹

Healthcare professionals owe certain duties to their patients and a breach in any of these duties gives a cause of action for negligence against them. The honorable Supreme Court of India brings Medical profession within the scope of the Consumer Protection Act of 1986. There has been an exponential rise in cases of negligence in various parts of country. With continuing advances in science and technology, diagnosis and treatment are becoming more and more sophisticated and interpersonal care has been neglected. The corruption has permeated the world of medicine and it has a corrosive effect on the

doctor-patient relationship.² Lack of trust in doctors, and the costs associated in seeing them has also poisoned the previously valued doctor-patient relationship.

Not only the doctors and patients are to be blamed for this imbalance, the inequity in the healthcare system has acted like a catalyst itself; it is one of the most privatized in the world, with out of pocket expenditure on healthcare at more than 70%, far higher even than in the United States.³

Commercialization with heavy involvement of money, technological development in the stream of medical sciences, growth of health insurance companies, patient's desire in share decision making, lack of patience in today's generation are few factors behind changing doctor- patient relationship.

Medicine has accepted standards of ethical conduct on a global basis. The Indian medical profession should also adhere and be held accountable to these. Currently, however, it seems to be failing in this regard.

The need of the hour is to develop a system through which the issues or discrepancies among doctor-patient relationship can be improved. The association bodies concerning healthcare professionals and patients or social activists should work out together to find a certain solution to tackle the conflicts and issues.

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