

## Ode to Hippocrates

"But I will keep my life and my art in purity and holiness"

*-The Hippocratic Oath*

For millions of years, society has been worshipping the Art of medicine and the one practicing it. In the eyes of society, doctors are noble beings who are above all the things immoral or inappropriate. The amount of trust this patient bestows on her doctor as she willingly allows herself to be examined in front of a class of 50 is magnanimous.

It is to avoid such situations that we teach our novice doctors the examination protocol and medical ethics when they first step in the clinical wards. The importance of taking consent from the patient, making introductions and then asking the right questions to make the patient more comfortable and to remain calm, poised, serious and confident throughout the whole ordeal is the key to medical professionalism that was first introduced by Hippocrates a thousand years ago.

Unfortunately, here in Pakistan little care is given to this aspect of medical professionalism. More than often, we see a middle-aged man/woman exposed on a couch in front of a batch of 20 and being forgotten for variable periods of time as the teacher divulges into the varying aspects of his/her medical condition. Thereafter, the poor soul is subject to poking by various amateurs trying to learn how to locate an enlarged liver and that too without his permission. Alarmingly, it is not uncommon for our students in final professional OSCE to come across a patient who is too agitated to allow examination by an umpteenth doctor. Once, a child went missing here in a medical ward because he managed to hide himself in the almirah to avoid percussions to his poor chest. Another incidence, when a poor patient, half dressed was lying without blanket in the verandah of a tertiary care hospital. He was being ignored ruthlessly by the final year students who were chatting and laughing while going to the outdoor departments. These examples depict the morbidity of our medical profession. We might satisfy our conscience by false logics such as the needs of a teaching hospital for educational purposes only but no logic is reason enough to justify this unprofessional behavior. I remember a kind teacher of mine narrating, "If your patient feels any discomfort, cold, pain or as much as a flicker of fear during examination, you should know that you have failed as a medical professional."

The fact of matter is that we in Pakistan are blessed with the best kind of patients to work with, they are too innocent, oblivious to their own rights and too impressed by the white coats we wear. The amount of trust they put in our profession demands our utmost respect. A few kindly spoken words explaining the procedure and asking for patient's permission before making him a subject of our lectures can not only do wonders to a patient's moral but will also teach a point or two to our medical apprentices.

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