

## Bioethics: Need of the Hour

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The word 'Bioethics' has been circulating in Indian Medical Teaching field since last 5 years and have really gained momentum by all our Medical fraternity in last couple of years since we started celebrating World Bioethics Day in 2016. Before this, Ethics and Etiquettes have been laid down to all of us by Medical Council of India long ago which we follow [1]. We all take the Hippocratic Oath while being conferred on with M.B.B.S. Degree as we have to maintain highest standard of Ethics and Etiquettes within us while we practice Medicine. This is important to us as our profession has been given the highest respect among all other professions and we are considered only next to God especially in India.

Nowadays, we hear, read and see lot of disturbing news against doctors about not following these very basic standards of Ethics and Etiquettes while practicing Medicine and resort to all other wrong ways such as taking commissions from laboratories for ordering investigations, doing procedures and surgeries which are unwarranted and giving false certificates for money.

Apparently, money has been blamed by many as the main culprit for resorting to such means by many doctors who are under trial. However, no one talks about the morality issues here. Common public blame the doctors for doing such things for sake of money and the wrong doing of one such doctor spoils the sanctity of our noble profession. But, is money the only thing to blame for? Or is there more than money? It is lack of ethical values among these doctors which lead to such crimes. Money should not be blamed as it can be earned through right path also. Although it requires more time and patience something that is highly lacking in these individuals.

Bioethics is based on four main principles of 1) Autonomy, 2) Nonmaleficence, 3) Beneficence and 4) Justice [2]. The first principle of Autonomy tells us to respect all human beings and take their opinion into consideration while doing any research on them or subjecting them for any trial or for that matter in treating them also. It means taking an 'Informed Consent' from that individual. You treat every individual only after they take appropriate choice [Autonomous decision] about their health willingly after explaining to them all pros and cons off your study. Without this above mentioned activities should not be conducted.

The second principle of Nonmaleficence in simple words means 'Do no harm'. There were few unethical trials conducted in medical field in the past in America and in India too that violated all these four cardinal principles and all the participating people were harmed by those studies which were later got abandoned. The study cannot be done by harming the individuals by either act of commission or omission. In common language, we consider it negligent if one imposes a careless or unreasonable risk of harm upon another. This principle affirms the need for medical competence. It is clear that medical mistakes may occur; however, this principle articulates a fundamental commitment on the part of health care professionals to protect their patients from harm.

The third principle of Beneficence means the researcher will pass on all the benefits available to their subjects/ participating people without any discrimination and will not hold

back any specific benefit willingly. In the infamous 'The Tuskegee Study' all the benefits were withheld willingly from the participating people who were eventually harmed by the study. It is sometimes held that nonmaleficence is a constant duty, that is, one ought never to harm another individual, whereas beneficence is a limited duty. A doctor has a duty to seek the benefit of any or all of her patients, however, a doctor may also choose whom to admit into his or her practice, and does not have a strict duty to benefit patients not acknowledged in the panel. This duty becomes complicated if two patients appeal for treatment at the same time. Here, the criteria of urgency might be used, or some principle of first come first served, to decide who should be helped at the time.

The last and most important principle of Justice tells us that in health care justice is usually defined as a form of fairness, or as Aristotle once said, "Giving to each that which is his due." This implies the fair distribution of medicines in society and requires that we look at the role of entitlement. One needs to plan the distribution of medicines for the given population only after properly calculating the available resources and also make additional provision of it.

So, the Bioethics has a vast role to play in modern healthcare [3]. But, my point is these all principles were already written down by our ancestors thousands of years ago in our scriptures plus in Medieval Indian Time also. We have not studied well the Shushrusha, Charaka and Dhanwantari principles which itself forms the base of Indian Medicine like Ayurveda [4] and other medical disciplines throughout the world. It started with Manusmriti [5] an ancient Indian writing which states about ways of life and rules to be followed by a human being almost 5000 years ago. In the most important Hindu epic of Mahabharata [6], everything to be done in life is

written so beautifully like no other book. In ancient India even the ethical code about abortions was written [7]. Thus we should revisit this hidden and forgotten Indian Treasure of Culture, Wisdom and Ethical Principles to enrich and strengthen this newly introduced concept of Bioethics in our medical curriculum.

Our students not only come to us for knowledge but mainly for our approach towards handling any clinical/ medical situation where all the four main principles of Bioethics are always cherished. Bioethics mainly improves our affective domain. This affectionate approach towards our patients gives them a sense of support, security and mental strength to face their medical problems for which they have approached us. It also creates a healthy bond between the patient and the doctor. It facilitates the communication with our patients thus avoids any misunderstandings and myths about their medical conditions [8].

Thus, it is very important for all of us to introduce this novel concept of Bioethics when we teach our undergraduates as well as postgraduate students so they can also have such healthy connection with their patients [9]. Nowadays, many problems against doctors have arisen because doctors do not talk much with patients and rely too much on investigations to support their diagnosis. Clinical acumen, attitude and good communication skills will keep every doctor safe from facing such hurdles in their practice. Thus, Bioethics is important in Research, treating the Cancer patients, care of terminally ill patients plus relieves moral stress of the doctors [10] and absorb as a way of any Doctor's life.

## References

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