

**Editorial**

**Medical Ethics/professionalism and Concept of Holistic Curriculum in a Medical School**

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The growing interest in learning and teaching professionalism is due to its profound impact on healthcare delivery system. Professionalism is that eminence which drives a person's appearance, personal and professional interactions, and presents first impression on others. The greater the degree to which a person exemplifies professionalism, the easier it will be for him to be set apart from people around him. This brilliant attribute can't go unnoticed by his superiors. The more a person or organization displays professionalism, the more opportunities for success it will have. In order to become an outstanding doctor, we must be able to do more than treat illness and disease. We need to be acquainted with how to relate to the people around us, both patients and staff. The doctors are no more considered, persons who merely visit the patients and manage their ailments. In modern times, physicians must also be capable business professionals; running practices and offices in a professional manner. Teaching errands related to medical professionalism should be foremost in the minds of medical teachers. Ignorance to these facts will have momentous impact on the medical profession and dreadful consequences in the society at large scale. While preparing /training finest quality of physician's, three crucial domains of medical education including, cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains are contemplated at every educational stride. Medical education remained focused on acquiring knowledge (Cognition) and skills (psychomotor skills) but least attention was focused on the affective domain of medical education. The performance (Pr) of medical professional is utterly a reflection of; how is educated and trained in these domains:

Cognition (C), Psychomotor skills (P); Behaviors /Attitude (A) and is expressed in the following formula:  $Pr = (C+P) \times A$ . The paramount importance of teaching medical ethics and professionalism aiming to inculcate enviable attitude among medics while being trained, can well be understood due to changing world viewpoint on medical practice.

**Teaching Medical Ethics:** Modern Medical sciences have posed perplexing ethical questions requiring intensive research to develop consensus of opinion for the utilization of medical practitioners' at large scale. Faith is very important facet of every one's individual and collective life. In preparation of physicians at all levels, medical ethics and its applications need to be understood in its correct perception as being understood at global level and above all the believers. There is still very little know how about professionalism included in the curricula of the medical schools around the globe. In Muslim world there are two different groups of professionals: those who would accept anything labeled as scientific, irrespective of moral obligations or religious deliberations and those Islamic clerks who have religious knowledge, but not of medical sciences and are always ready to give their opinion on every emerging ethical issue without realizing that Islam does not permit rendering verdicts without thorough knowledge and profound understanding of the issue. *Ref: Qura'an; 33:36*). A Muslim firmly believes that Allah, the Almighty has provided eternal guidance in all facets of life, and in that list direction for the everyday impasses faced by humanity due to advancements in medical sciences is included. Our Medical school curriculum must include all those

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important issues, where either solution or direction towards solving complex emerging issues of biomedical ethics with special emphasis on Islamic laws and *shari'a* guidance to reach at certain practicable guiding rules. It is necessary for Muslim physicians to update their current knowledge and the Islamic standpoint in these areas, including basic question, "Who Gives and Takes life?" Should man control his life and death and that of other humans? Man now "thinks" he can create life or take it away, can he manipulates with life span. Are physicians to serve the creatures of Allah, or act as God themselves? It is here, when the basic understanding about every emerging issue might be enigmatic but a faithful physician must understand every ethical issue in the guidelines of shari'a, making the things more comprehensible and easy for physicians, patients and their families.

Teaching biomedical ethics and Professionalism has recently been introduced in the developed world. In Muslim world there is dire need to introduce Medical Ethics and Professionalism as essential component of the curriculum, integrating instructions and assessments in all modules of Integrated Modular Curriculum. It is still missing from the medical curricula of most of the medical schools of Pakistan. However we introduced this and are being practiced successfully in Azad Jammu and Kashmir Medical College since its inception. The majority of the medical schools in the West that address professionalism during orientation classes, often in a "white-coat ceremony" designed to symbolize the matriculating students induction into the medical profession; while a number of schools in the West incorporate bioethics as a component of multiple courses. Less than a third of the medical schools in the West teach bioethics in a single course or as an integrated sequence of courses. There is no comprehensive data available about how professionalism and medical ethics is being taught at different levels of under and post graduate medical education in the West. We designed the holistic integration of medical curriculum with professionalism/ medical ethics at each spiral of graduate programs while similar assimilation continues into post graduate residency programs.

As a part of graduate program, the study of medical ethics spreads longitudinally to five years MBBS program. In first spiral (two years); general under-

standing of ethics, its importance, human behavior, disease and its perception with special emphasis on Islamic laws and guiding principles, inter-personal relationships and general conducts and behavior of medics; are being integrated in all modules from foundation module to the Neuroscience & Behavior Module. In spiral two (third year) patient- physician relationships, the ethics of clinical practice and relationship with allied specialties and patients rights are included. In 3<sup>rd</sup> spiral (4<sup>th</sup>& 5<sup>th</sup> Year) ethics of human and animal research and relationship with pharmaceutical/ allied industries; contemporary issues (cloning, stem cell research, issue related to fertilization, organ transplant & tissue grafting, termination and prevention of pregnancy, cosmetic and sex redesigning surgery, Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) and end of life issues, etc.), ethical concerns and characteristics of physicians are being integrated with all modules and elective rotations.

Our residency programs are designed to cater for more detailed studies of professional ethics as a science & research subjects and address how to covenant with the future research findings in ethical environment aiming to find best practices in professional life. All beliefs, faith and moralities are finely integrated to meet the requirement of particular society. Assessment of professionalism is designed in the module and Block examinations using multiple assessment tools like MCQs, SAQs/SEQs and Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA).

Though, it is utterly important to acquire knowledge and expertise of different medical specialties but correct understanding and application of affective domain of medical profession is foremost important. Being an important component of physician's contract with society, professionalism is required to make informed decisions for our patients.

Certain behaviors, early in medical education do correlate with nonprofessional conduct during a physician's career. We must be aware about such undesirable behaviors and let our students and trainees know why we're so concerned about them. Professionalism/ bioethical training and assessment must be integral part of Health Professions Curriculum at under and post graduate levels. The achievement in professionalism/ bioethics must reflect in the final transcripts bestowed upon the graduates after their exit examinations.

As part of program evaluation, we continuously monitor the outcome of our exercises at all level and being presented for open criticism in the academic council.

**Conclusion:** Bioethics/ professionalism instructions and assessment are an integral component of medical education. Inculcating bioethics as an essential component of curriculum can be practiced even in resource constrained environment, provided there is strong longing to do so. Training and preparing professionally upright and ethical physicians, does not require much of the financial resources rather a

robust desire and considerately prepared curriculum map will serve the purpose. Through sound reasoning and taking all stake holders on board, a medical curriculum should be redesigned and if previously existing fractionalized teaching of bioethics is integrated with clinical teaching, it will generate enormous interest and enhanced learning capabilities of students and residents. Newer elements of ethics teaching should be carefully incorporated, taking account of educational theory, principles of medical ethics, considering principles of faith and believes as inspiring spiritual essentials.

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