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Doctor- Patient Communication(II)

Religious belief and medical ethics

Religion and spirituality have profoundly impacted social thought, teaching, health, and medical ethics.

With the growth of training schools and **Evidence Based Medicine (EBM** also called **evidence-based health care**, approach to patient care in which decisions about the diagnosis and management of the individual patient are made by a clinician, using personal experience and expertise combined with the best, most relevant, and most up-to-date scientific research information available) there was gradual separation of entities of doctor and religion. Medical teaching and therapies were located in the material world and the healing was located in the material world and the healing was focused on human body and mind. Spiritual healing gradually lost its connection with medical treatment. Today, the trend has come full circle and the practice of holistic medicine is steadily regaining lost ground.

Beliefs about the value of human life, compassion, and the practitioner role in healing can greatly impact the quality of our work and service as doctors. In the same way, religious beliefs of patients can affect the manner in which they respond to illness, suffering, pain healing, death, and medical care. As we live and work in a multicultural, multi-religious society, we are aware of the diverse and coexisting attitudes and customs among patients. To fully empathize with a patient, the physician should have a working knowledge of some religious beliefs and traditions around health, illness, life and death. Acknowledgment of these beliefs could facilitate better communication and management of patients in clinical settings.

Listed below are some areas where knowledge of religious beliefs can improve communication and promote empathy and trust in profession:

- beginning of life
- Meaning of life
- Value of human life
- Meaning of suffering
- Reason of illness

- Death and dying
- Life after death
- Abortion and contraception
- Organ transplantation
- Psychiatric illness
- Use of indigenous drugs
- Rituals, fasting, circumcision

Examples of religious beliefs:

- In aboriginal New Zealand people communities their head hair is holy so one should consider that when doing research on their hairs.
- Among Muslims and Christians, catholic strongly believe that life begins from conception and its immoral to abort the fetus at any stage of its development, except if the mother life is in danger. Doctors need to be sensitive about such beliefs when presenting options of care.
- Conservative Buddhists believe that the body should not be disturbed until three days after death as it may interfere with reincarnations ((the rebirth of a soul in a new body). This would impact discussions with the family regarding autopsy or organ transplant.

Some disadvantages of the modern medical school, which is reflected on the professional behavior of doctors: -

- 1- Doctors are not aware of multicultural, multi-religious society they live and work in. The diversity of religious beliefs and customs among patients has not been taken in consideration by doctors.
- 2- Separation between the body and the soul (more than 80% of those who go to doctors suffer directly or indirectly from mental disorders, which is less than what the doctor cares about!!).
- 3- Separation between prevention and treatment.
- 4- Exaggeration in the specialization, which makes the doctor looks at a small, small part of the patient as if the whole human forgetting that the whole human body and soul is a complete unit integrated.
- 5- Modern technology slavery, which makes the doctor in some cases such as robot is required by the protocols of this technique, leaving the sensations of the patient and psychological concerns. In addition to possible complications of those techniques.

6- Disparities in health care levels in many countries, priority is given to large, high-tech hospitals, with severe neglect in primary health care.