KGMU Lucknow

Letter to the Editor

**Gayathri Prabhu makes a case for inclusion of humanities in Medical -Education curriculum. And she is disappointed with it not finding a suitable place in the newly introduced competency -based -curriculum of MCI. She puts forward several arguments to build up the case(1) and we agree with those points. However we believe that the case for teaching and discussing humanities with budding doctors is larger and stronger. We enumerate a few points in favour of the same, although this is not a complete list. Nowadays we read in newspapers stories of alleged harassment by administrative officers of Obstetricians and Radiologists for failing to adhere to guidelines of PCPNDT Act (2). But origin of the problem lies in using science in violation of humanities. Sex- selective- abortion is a problem having its roots in deep social prejudices against girl children and infants- which gets now compounded by contemporary technological sophistication/ evolution. History teaches us anecdotes of starving and smothering female infants by several means (3). But now with the universal availability of economical (cheap) ultrasound machines, the killings has reached an enormous/unprecedented/ diabolical dimension so as to account for tens of millions of ‘missing women’(4).**

**Similarly organ transplantation science had had several setbacks due to unscrupulous/abhorrent practice of harvesting organs from ‘have -nots’, and gifted to ‘haves’ of our society. Its permanent solution lies in cloning these organs in the laboratories ,but to make advanced research in that direction ,we need funding and that includes liaison of medicine, humanities, law, economics, policy making/ political science and social sciences. If  concurrent teaching of these parallel disciplines lacks in our Medical Colleges as of today, its resultant mayhem is also visible in the form of raids, seizures, arrests and falling reputation of big corporate hospitals (5). Science of gifting organs to another human being could have become the hope for the needy to alleviate the human suffering, which at present is mired in controversy overshadowing other ambitions.**

**2 Years ago our government slashed prices of cardiac stents (6) and knee implants by law and opened a new window for discussion on overcharging of -and profiteering on -medical devices. The issue is still unsettled/ evolving (7) but shows us that when our internal system does not find a solution to our contemporary challenges, external force is used to gain same objective. Our young doctors need to be taught these lessons -of our past and our present -so as to make them weigh intelligently choices in front of them when they get opportunity/ moral obligation in their medical carriers. We believe that the lessons we learned in our carriers as something at hand, discovering rules of the game while navigating our unchartered paths and territories, should be formally taught to budding medicos in a classrooms, so that when they observe something at crossroads of medicine and humanities later on, they choose the best.**

**Human computer interface, brain mapping, artificial intelligence (8), assisted/ deep learning, virtual assistance, enhancing cognitive skills, decoding dreams (9), desire for immortality -through research on telomerase- are areas of cutting edge research (10) in medical science today which have a fair- if not larger- share in humanities, and we need to guide our young medicos so that these branches don’t see a fate which we are observing at present with ultrasound machines and organ -transplantation. While making progress in these scientifically adventurous ‘moon shots’, our conscience should be guided by humanities, and not by desire to make quick money, by underhand tactics, misuse of office and of scientific knowledge. We dream of a future where scientific temperament of Albert Einstein is coupled with moral principles of Mahatma Gandhi, and not of Adolf Hitler- or his Nazi Medical experiments.**

**Frontiers of our current day medical research lie at the intersection of medicine and humanities. And today we have a historical opportunity to steer its direction. Let’s not just slip away this moment for the welfare of the posterity !**

***Dr. Harish Gupta, Associate Professor, Medicine, KGMU Lucknow, UP***

***Dr Nitu Nigam, Assistant Professor (Cytogenetics Unit) ,CFAR KGMU Lucknow ,UP***

***Dr Sudhir Kumar Verma, Associate Professor, Medicine, KGMU Lucknow ,UP 226 003***

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