**TITLE: Current Medical Practice: New Ethical Challenges**

**AUTHOR: P N Tandon**

***Review Comments and Suggestions***

The title says that “new” ethical challenges that afflict the practice of medicine shall be explored, presented and discussed in the piece; however, while a near-exhaustive list of several challenges is provided, no significantly ‘new’ challenge is mentioned.

The piece contains some broad generalizations and sweeping statements that, unless referenced, would come across as heavily opinionated. Two such instances have been highlighted in the paper. If such ‘conclusions’ seem necessary to the argument of the paper, then they should necessarily be referenced, or toned down, or else at least explain how s/he arrived at those, viz. saying that doctors are not trained to take holistic views.

Some sections are lengthy but do not serve the purpose beyond a point: for instance, on page-2, where the author discusses Gawande’s book, the details of the expenses of cancer therapy might be taken off; instead the main argument should get highlighted, viz. the issue and politics of healthcare expenses without the several figures.

There are several questions in the piece; while one understands and appreciates the rhetorical nature of those, the number of such unanswered questions, questions that are only an indicator (of the alleged ethical dilemmas facing the doctor), are far too many and should be reduced.

Mid-way through the piece, on page-3, after stating a series of questions, the author writes, “Such questions are commonplace...” After specifically mentioning towards the middle of the piece that such questions are “commonplace”, the author does not mark any noticeable distinction of the ‘uncommon’-set of questions. The section after talks about the unfair practices of drug companies and tangentially touches upon the ethics of publications. In the last but one paragraph the author talks about the effect of super-specialization which has come to fragment the patient and make her/him increasingly vulnerable. But this is not a new critique.

In the final paragraph the author writes, “It will be obvious from the above description that medical practice has undergone a sea-change during the last couple of decades. […] At the same time it has led to complex socio-economic and ethical issues. To meet the new challenges we need major changes in our medical education which unfortunately is not able to keep pace with the advances.” The “above descriptions”, as s/he says, gives us an idea of how medical practice has changed not just over the last two decades but more than that, but to call it “new” might not be the best way to put things. Finally, the last line evokes the topic of medical education; if that is indeed the main peg of the paper, it would be good to foreground it in an unambiguous way. In that sense, there seems to be a basic disjunct in the paper; the author repeats that medical pedagogy (in India) is not equipped to train medical students to overcome the challenges that await them. But few ‘new’ challenges are discussed. Is this then a criticism of the pedagogy? If so, then in itself it could be a valid focal point, but that should come out even clearly in the discussions.

However, notwithstanding these, given the importance of the issue at large, it is recommended that the author rewrites the piece either (i) tabling and discussing one or a few ethical challenges that have come to afflict medical practice only in the past few years or a decade, or (ii) change the focus of the article to argue that despite these several ethical challenges that medical practice has continued to grapple with over the past several years, challenges which have gone on multiplying and getting increasingly complex, as technology furthered the advancement of medical science, and new sub-specialized fields opened up before us, medical education continues to lag; this yawning gap between what medical students are taught and what awaits them in the field affects medical practice in so and so ways, and so on … (iii) In case the author does not wish to take on a complete rewriting, s/he could then consider shortening and rewriting this piece as a Letter to the Editor.

However, if either one of the first two options is selected the author should necessarily reference the statements that merit a reference (this applies all the more to the 2nd option).