

Bombay's best doctors. How to find them and where to receive the finest treatment.

Tabrik Currinbtloy. Context, New Delhi. 1994, 214 pages. Rs. 85.

'The right of Tabrik Currinbtloy to be identified as the author of this book is asserted by him.' Following this unusual avowal we read that 'every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of all entries...' Currinbtloy reassures the rest of the profession, 'The omission of names of any doctor, hospital, medical institution, facility or diagnostic centre does not in any way imply criticism or lack of faith.'

What is the aim of the author? '...giving the patient a choice and an opportunity to consider where he can get the best possible medical attention for his particular problem...'

How did the author collect his data? 'The method that has been used in naming the *Best of them* is both subjective and deductive given the fact that no precise, objective approach is...possible. The calibre of a doctor and the quality of his treatment cannot be measured... Just a *success-rate*, bringing in its wake vague considerations like *fame* and *popularity* do not necessarily reflect talent. It may well be that a brilliant Neurosurgeon has a higher failure-rate operating on his patients, simply because he is willing to take the chance in accepting hopeless cases which may have been refused by his less confident counterparts...

'The ...doctors whose names appear... have been chosen with an acute sense of responsibility after long and searching discussions with their colleagues both within their own specialties and from outside... Who would they get treated by if faced with a medical problem themselves?... The other important method was to take a close look at the *second opinion* factor... Whose second opinion would (these doctors) seek for difficult cases...'

Not surprisingly. I turned to the field about which I know a little - neurosurgery. On reading the second entry under this specialty, I wondered how Dr. P. E. Bhatnagar could have erred so gravely. She is certainly not in the list of pediatricians. Currinbtloy tells us that she was awarded the M.S. and M.Ch. The latter degree must have been obtained whilst she was Head of the Department of Pediatrics at the K. E. M. Hospital for that is when the course in neurosurgery was started. Dr. Gajendra Sinha has been inducted into the Sikh fraternity and into the B. J. Wadia Children's Hospital, where, presumably, he assists Dr. Pilloo Bharucha!

Is the book a violation of medical ethics? If - as appears most likely - it has been written by a person who is not a medical practitioner, the question of medical ethics does not arise. The author must be faulted for **blatant misrepresentation of facts and misleading the sick. These might cause irreparable harm.** One example: Patients rushing to Jaslok and Bombay Hospital after serious injury or accident may be turned away for a variety of reasons. Currinbtloy tells us that he has consulted medical doctors. Since we know nothing more about them it is impossible to draw any conclusions. Were they indeed men of eminence and rectitude, they should have checked the book for accuracy. In fairness, the author should have told readers their names for they appear to be his chief source of information.

There are established objective means for evaluating the calibre of a doctor. It is a pity Currinbtloy is ignorant of them. Had he used them, he would, perhaps, have achieved part of his stated goal.

Sunil Pandya

Life according to knowledge is not that which makes men act rightly and be happy, not even if all the sciences be included but... this has to do with one science only, that of good and evil. For, let me ask you...whether if you take away this science from all the rest, medicine will not equally give health? ...And yet... none of these things will be well or beneficially done, if the science of the good be wanting.

Plato (427?-347 BC) in Charmides 173.B (translated by Benjamin Jowett)