

Letter to the editor...

Thank you for the newsletter *Medical Ethics*. It is a sad state of affairs when the practice of medicine demands the necessity of such a newsletter or journal as in other countries.

Ethics, whether medical or otherwise, are inborn and should come naturally. Does a person have to observe a moral code just because there is a law concerning it which should not be broken? Under the present circumstances will a newsletter like this have any effect on the profession at large? The persons who read such a newsletter will be those who believe in medical ethics and wish to improve themselves. What about those who should change their ways and attitudes? Will they even glance through the newsletter or will they throw it into the waste paper basket? Take the article on elections to the MMC? Will those on board pay heed to the warnings given or will they try newer unethical ways and means to secure their seats?

Even so, such a newsletter is necessary because unless one makes the voice of sanity heard there is no hope of improvement and a bad situation continues or gets worse. Apart from medical politics and the attitude of medical practitioners towards one another and toward their patients, there are many other aspects which require elucidation and discussion. What may have been right and correct in one period may not necessarily be right and correct in another. Abortion and euthanasia are two examples. I am sure the newsletter will prove a source of light to those who grope in the dark as to the proper action when they face a problem.

May I suggest that you ask two experts in the field to present opposing viewpoints on controversial subjects?

As regards the situation of MOTHER vs FETUS, in my opinion the line of action followed by the doctors was absolutely correct. The prime factor in any situation is the intention of the doctor in charge of the case. If this is honest and sincere and based on sound reasoning, no fault can be attributed to him for he has acted in the best interests of both mother and fetus. What guarantee is there ~~2~~that a caesarian operation performed whilst the mother was alive would have resulted in a normal fetus? Such an operation would certainly have jeopardised the life of the mother.

I wish the newsletter every success.

Dr. Samuel J. AYTEKAR MS, FRCS
P. O. Box 1005, Nazareth Illit, Code 17110,
ISRAEL.

(*Editorial note:* Dr. Aptekar is an alumnus of the Grant Medical College and Sir J. J. Group of Hospitals. He served his *alma mater* on his return from England. He was appointed to the Goculdas Tejpal Hospital. He retired as Assistant Honorary Professor of Surgery and has, since, settled in Israel. He maintains a keen interest in events in India, especially in the field of medical education.)

Contributions to *Medical Ethics* welcome.

We welcome contributions to this newsletter on any aspect of medical ethics.

Personal dilemmas, solutions to difficult ethical problems, constructive criticism based on your experiences (with other medical practitioners, laboratories, imaging centres...), current practices that need correction and your suggestions on how improvements can be made will help many of us.

**As long as our approach is constructive,
we should not fear controversy.**

Whilst we'd be grateful for contributions typed with double spacing on one side of A4 sheets, we will use essays, letters and other items in legible handwriting as well.

Please address the envelope to Dr. S. K. Pandya, Department of Neurosurgery, K. E. M. Hospital, Parel, Bombay 4000 12.

All other correspondence on
Forum for Medical Ethics:
Dr. Anil Pilgaokar, 34-B
N. Bharucha Road, Bombay 400 007

Letter to the Editor...

There is an outcry against the **commercialisation**, rampant profiteering and exploitation in hospitals by doctors and others in the medical profession under the weight of which it has become almost impossible for the poor, middle class and the white collar fraternity in the country in general, particularly in Bombay and Delhi, to get medical assistance and relief within their means.

Once a patient enters a hospital for medical aid and treatment, he is treated as a guinea-pig and without knowing why, he is pushed on to several diagnostic and research machines and is made to pay fancy fees and charges which, in many cases, breaks the back of the patient and his relatives.

The fees of the specialists for visiting a patient at his house are fantastic. Large hospitals have become **5-star** hotels and patients are fleeced in several ways. No wonder the people have realised that it is cheaper to die at home than to pay hospital bills and the highly exorbitant fees of the doctors.

The need for a forum to save the patients from these excesses of the medical profession and to make efforts to secure the provision of cheap medical and hospitalisation services for the common man continues to be voiced from several quarters. Patients and their relatives are afraid to agitate against these malpractices apprehending vindictiveness on the part of doctors and hospitals when they need help.

It is in this context that genuinely motivated and dedicated social organisations like the Medico-Friends Circle, *Medical and Hospital Users' Welfare Association* and *Forum for Medical Ethics* have to take leading parts in alleviating the suffering of patients -

1. to check medical malpractices in various forms by doctors and hospitals;
2. to help and guide the unfortunate victims - patients and their relatives - to seek **QUICK** and **FAIR** redressal at the district and national Consumer Redressal Forums under the Consumer Protection Act 1986 for legitimate compensation and financial relief.

Indictments and censure by the Indian Medical Council,

state medical councils, other governmental organisations or the FDA have been few and leave the doctors unfazed.

The doctor-patient relationship has become very bitter and controversial over the last few years. The introduction of the Act to cover the medical profession and give protection to the consumers or patients has come as a rude shock to the medical fraternity.

The Consumers' Protection Act would cleanse the medical profession and truly make it a noble calling in the service of humanity.

S. C. Banerji
Senior Member, CGSI
Life Member, Indian Red Cross Society

(Editor's note: Similar sentiments are often to be found in the correspondence columns of our dailies. These do no credit to our profession. It is in our own interest that we root out practices that bring us disrepute.

Failure to do so will only further worsen the relationship so vital to success in our work - that between the patient and the doctor.)

Membership of *Forum for Medical Ethics*

This newsletter is, at present, available only to members of the Forum and a few other selected individuals and organisations.

The Forum is yet to complete its organisational formalities. As soon as the draft constitution has been finalised it will be sent to members. We shall, then, welcome your suggestions and comments on it.

The Forum can only serve its purpose when all those worried about medical ethics come together. First of all, we need concern and meaningful discussion. Next, we need help in publishing the newsletter and other publications that may emerge from the study groups.

How will you assist?