

INDIAN JOURNAL OF MEDICAL ETHICS

JOURNAL OF THE FORUM FOR MEDICAL ETHICS SOCIETY SINCE 1993

ONLINE ISSN: 0975-5691 | PRINT ISSN: 0974-8466

REPORT

WORKSHOP ON PROMOTING PROFESSIONALISM AND ETHICAL PRACTICES IN MEDICINE: Indian doctors from across the globe working together

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After almost a year of preparation and planning, the Workshop on *Promoting professionalism and ethical practices in medicine* was finally held on January 10, 2014, in Kolkata. It brought together Indian doctors from overseas, who were in Kolkata for the GAPIO annual conference (www.gapio.in), with a number of India based colleagues, many of whom have been actively steering this agenda for years. The objectives of the workshop were:

- a. To learn about the state of professionalism and ethical practices in medicine in India: where we are and what is being done to address any problems;
- b. To learn about the experiences of Indian doctors overseas and explore their relevance to India;
- c. To discuss the values and behaviours (the professional framework) required – what the ***Global Indian Doctor*** should be like;
- d. To discuss and develop a potential programme of work to recognise, support and develop health leaders who can help promote these values and behaviours.

The details of the workshop including the pre-workshop publication and the event report are available from www.leadershipforhealth.com and I do not intend repeating them here, and would urge readers to look these up on the website. Suffice it to say that it was a very informative and useful event and gave some pointers on the next steps to ensure that we build on what was started there. I am also very grateful to the many colleagues, especially Amar Jesani and Nobhojit Roy, who gave their time prior to and during the workshop.

Clearly a one-day event to address this agenda is not enough, especially when we bring together a very passionate and disparate group (given that different participants brought in differing perspectives) for the first time – the ‘Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing’ stages of the team building were evident there too. Some of us who have been living abroad for many years were struck by the scale of the problems but took equal consolation from the various attempts being made to address many deep-rooted challenges. There was a ‘Can do’ spirit in the room and the subsequent flurry of email activity affirmed the interest in continuing the discussions and in taking forward some specific projects. And all of this has given us a glowing feeling of satisfaction of job well done.

However, the workshop also posed some questions: How to ‘influence and support’ from outside India--diaspora can be a two edged sword – to add value, and not create chaos. There was some discussion about the membership of the GAPIO Executive Committee and whether a body which has doctors whose professionalism is/has been questioned can be credible? Is there really a critical mass of committed people yet? It is of course early days, but can we and how can we take forward some of the possible next steps? Will we have the energy and resources to do so, and sustain the projects? Is there a danger of creating another parallel programme, given that MFC and IJME are already doing a lot of such work- why reinvent the wheel? What exactly are we going to do, and how will we know we are being successful?

Not with standing these questions, I feel the important thing now is to carry on and ‘Just do it’. Whilst things look bleak in India, we are not unique. There are similar challenges across most of the globe- almost all societies are struggling to ensure affordable and safe healthcare and address a widening health divide. There is a lot more to do in India, but in the grand scheme of things we are slowly creeping towards the ‘tipping point’, and should continue with our various efforts and ensure that we stay connected and support each other. I am personally very conscious that at this stage I am sometimes criticised for putting a spin on things – how can I fail to see that the Indian health system is collapsing – but I justify my stance on the basis that giving up is simply not an option. We can and should do it better, we should remain positive, and even if we do not succeed in our lifetimes we must try.

I will be happy to provide regular updates and/or you can follow developments via the
www.leadershipforhealth.com website. Also may I urge you to guide us – drop me a line at
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