

*Homeopaths practicing allopathy*¹

Justice B. V. Eradi, President of The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum has directed the Union Health Ministry and the Medical Council of India to look into the question of whether a homeopath is entitled to practice allopathy.

...The directive was part of a ruling in which the National Forum dismissed a complaint of medical negligence filed by Ms. Poonam Verma against Bombay-based physician Dr. Ashwin Patel in 1992.

...(A) Supreme Court ruling in the case of A. K. Sabhapathy versus the State of Kerala which was published in All India Reporter of 1992 clearly said that 'no person other than a registered practitioner or a person entered as a practitioner in the relevant lists shall practice or hold himself out as practicing modern medicine, Homeopathic medicine, Ayurvedic medicine or Siddha medicine or shall practice any other medicine unless he is also a registered practitioner of that medicine.'

Thus, while the apex court does not impose any restrictions on doctors who hold dual qualifications, it clearly specifies that such doctors must also be registered separately in both systems of medicine.

Elsewhere in the National Forum's judgement it is noted that Dr. Patel had a diploma (not a degree) in Homeopathy. He has asked whether the content of the course included sufficient knowledge of anatomy, physiology, pharmacology and other subjects to be of the same standard as an MBBS course. 'His answers during cross-examination are somewhat dubious,' the Forum members wrote,

Dr. Patel also could not give a specific reply when asked whether he was allowed to practice allopathy in Maharashtra...

*Doctors losing respect*²

To ensure that the issue of kidney transplants does not fade into oblivion like several earlier issues, the state Medical Service Center, along with the Department of Social Work, Bangalore University organised a seminar on 'The Kidney Racket' in the city today.

Speaking on the controversial issue, Professor K. M. Srinivasa Gowda, head of the department of pathology, Kempegowda Institute of Medical Sciences, underlined the corruption that exists in the medical profession. He said that the medical profession was losing face with every doctor wanting to make a quick buck.

Dr. Gowda pointed out that the kidney

racket, which had affected so many lives, 'will be given a maximum of 15 days exposure while the media covers it, after which the whole issue will be put into cold storage.'

Equating doctors with car mechanics, Dr. Gowda said, 'Removing an organ has become like removing a car part which is not needed and fixing it somewhere else.'

*Official disinterest in kidney racket*³

The Director of Medical Education and Research (DMER), P. V. Sathe and Director of Health Services, Subhash Salunke did not attend the crucial two-day meeting of the Maharashtra Medical Council (MMC) which began a probe into the kidney scandal.

Drs. Sathe and Salunke are ex-officio members of the MMC. The former was president of MMC till January 31, 1995.

MMC members have expressed surprise over the failure of the two officials to attend the meeting particularly when the entire agenda was sent to all members well in advance to ensure that they take active part in the proceedings.

Drs. Sathe and Salunke have been appointed heads of the two committees set up by the State Government following enactment of the Transplantation of Human Organs Act. Dr. Sathe has been appointed Chairman of the Authorisation Committee. Dr. Salunke has been appointed the appropriate authority for effective implementation of the new legislation.

A senior MMC member asked how, if top officials remain absent at crucial meetings, they will brief the Government on the MMC proceedings on the scandal which rocked the metropolis two months back.

The appointment of Dr. Ashique Rawal, who was booked by the police for alleged involvement in the kidney racket, on the kidney transplant team at the J. J. Group of Hospitals has surprised the medical fraternity. Senior professors at this hospital stated, 'The Government and the DMER are fully aware of the involvement of Dr. Rawal in the controversial kidney operations. Despite this he has been included in the team.'

*The kidney racket (continued)*⁴

At least four patients (in Bangalore) who got kidneys transplanted from donors have died due to doctors' negligence, flouting of norms and procedures involved in such operations. Dr. Rajshekhar, head of the Urology Department, Victoria Hospital,

Bangalore, appointed as a one-man enquiry committee by the State Government to investigate the kidney racket has held Drs. Siddaraju, Dilip Patil and Adil Ahmed responsible for the deaths of at least four such patients.

The report pointed out that Mr. Deveerappa, a farmer from Hebbali village, who donated a kidney and his relatives were not briefed about the possible repercussions, nor was their consent taken...

Vital details like the address of the donor, details on his family, findings on angiography have not been documented. Startlingly, the case sheet of Mr. P. K. Jain, a resident of Bangalore who received a kidney transplant on January 11, 1995 at Yellamma Dasappa Hospital and died ten days later does not bear the name of the donor.

In several instances the case sheets showed that the left kidney had been removed from the donor whereas investigation on these patients show that the removal was from the right side although this is not the preferred side.

*Worried doctors*⁵

Participants at the 10th Annual Conference of the National Medicos' Organisation which started in Amritsar on April 14 expressed concern over 'declining ethical standards' among practitioners.

At the inaugural function the common refrain was 'it is no more a sense of service that drives the doctors but the lust for money.' The President, Sujit Dhar, wanted a system to make doctors more accountable to society. In his address, Dr. B. K. Sharma, Dean of the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine, Chandigarh, highlighted how over the past few years medical services had become oriented towards the care of the rich alone.

References

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2. Anonymous: Doctors losing respect, says KIMS dean. *Times of India* March 15, 1995. (News report obtained through the courtesy of Dr. K. S. Gangadhar, Bangalore. See Dr. Gangadhar's note on the resolution passed at this meeting on page 41 of this issue.)
3. Marpakwar Prafulla: Key officials avoid medical council inquiry on kidney racket. *Indian Express* April 18, 1995.
4. Chakravarthy M N: Kidney racket: report faults doctors. *Indian Express* April 23, 1995.
5. Anonymous: Decline in ethics worries doctors. *Times of India* April 16, 1995.