

False medical certificates settle the case

Satyapal Dang

The practice of issuing false medical certificates seems to be quite widespread. During the 1980s, as a legislator I recall publicly quoting the different rates at which money is charged for issuing false medical certificates in medico-legal case under various sections of the Indian Penal Code. The then civil surgeon confirmed my assertions but expressed his helplessness.

In the early 1990s, *The Times of India* and *Nawan Zamana*, a Punjabi daily from Jalandhar, carried reports alleging that doctors at the Amritsar civil hospital routinely issued false medical certificates, and gave full details of some 10 cases. The matter was raised

injuries before going to the police, where the daughter-in-law had also gone. All of them were told to get medical certificates from a civil hospital. The officer got himself admitted into the hospital, along with his son. The daughter-in-law was threatened by goondas outside the hospital and could not be admitted till the police and local public intervened.

In the meantime, the aggressors got medical certificates under Section 326 and 324 for small injuries while the daughter-in-law was given a certificate under Section 323, which is non-cognisable. The local assistant superintendent of police ordered registration of criminal cases against



Hemant Morparia

in the Assembly and after a year, two doctors were transferred. It was sentencing a murderer to six months' jail.

Recently, I came to know of a property dispute involving a retired officer of the LIC, and his sons from two marriages. The officer helped one set of sons attack their half-brother and his wife to evict them from their legal residence. In the attack, the daughter-in-law was beaten on her head with an iron instrument and started bleeding profusely. The officer and his sons inflicted themselves with minor

the aggrieved son and his severely-like injured wife, along with two neighbours who had tried to help them. They were saved only when the local people agitated. The ASP ordered an inquiry and the injuries were found to be self-inflicted. The ASP also ordered the registration of cases against those who had got a false FIR registered at the police station. This however, has not been done so far.

Four innocent people would have been sent to jail and possibly convicted on the basis of false medical certificates but for a chance public agitation. There is no doubt that many more people suffer because of this practice.

Satyapal Dang, Ekta Bhawan, Chhehartar (Amritsar), Punjab 143105.

NEWS

Locked up in the hospital

The Chennai high court ordered the release of K Sugutham, who was admitted for emergency cardiac care to the Santosham Chest hospital in Chennai, ran up a bill of Rs 50,000 in just two days, and was locked up for almost two months when he tried to get discharged.

Man held for not paying hospital bill is released. *PTI. The Times of India. October 21, 1998*

Delegating medical work

Dr R M Dhotre, resident medical Officer attached to a primary health centre in Mira-Bhayander, reportedly does not wear an apron or gloves while doing post mortems. The job is done by sweepers, and the doctor merely takes notes.

This doctor does post-mortems without touching the body. *The Times of India, Bombay Times. November 25, 1998*

Negligent orthopaedist

In Yavatmal, Maharashtra, a district consumer grievances forum has directed orthopaedist Ashok Kothari to pay Subhash Gulabrao Wadekar compensation of Rs 15,000 and Rs 14,000 for costs and medical expenses. Wadekar had asked for Rs 3 lakh when he found that a improperly set fracture left him unable to right, and hence to work properly.

Consumer Forum directs doctor to compensate patient. *Express News Service. Indian Express. November 17, 1998*

Would this happen in **India?**

The Professional Conduct Committee of the UK General Medical Council said it found sufficient evidence to judge three doctors guilty of serious professional misconduct. James Wisheart and Janardan Dhasmana conducted complex paediatric surgery for correction of atrioventricular septal defects and arterial switch operations without sufficient training or advice, despite concerns expressed on their extraordinarily high rates of mortality and morbidity (29 of 53 children operated died; four suffered brain damage). The then chief executive of the United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust, John Roylance, is accused of not intervening despite several complaints.

Evidence against 'Bristol-case' doctors found proven, Sarah Ramsay. *The Lancet. June 6, 1998*