

## Sense of service?

*Below is a copy of a letter sent to Dr K A Dinshaw, director of the Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai.*

Dear Dr Dinshaw,

My wife, a senior citizen over 67 years old took advantage of the free cancer check-up organised by your Preventive Oncology in March this year.

The experience she had at the TMC was, to say the least, horrifying. She was pushed from pillar to post, **sent** up and down floors, between buildings and traversing long corridors. All this could have been obviated if there was even a semblance of planning on the part of the organisers.

Today, she went because she had been asked to 'collect' the reports. It was the same story of being pushed around interminably. And after collecting the reports and the signatures of the doctors, the counter clerk took the entire file and said she could leave. She asked for the reports for her records, for which she had been specifically called there. She was told that the file remained with the TMC; she doesn't get any report from the file.

First, what was the propriety in calling her there at all if she was not to be given the reports or the copies thereof? Surely, **they** could have themselves made arrangements by which all reports are sent to one central record section for filing and records? Second, what is the point of getting the examination done if patients can't have the reports or copies thereof for their records?

There was no element of courtesy at any stage, leave aside any sense of service, in any of the staff or the doctors she had the misfortune to be pitted against.

Admittedly, this was a free camp. But, does it mean that the patients should be treated as beggars? Better not to have such free camps at all, in that case. And, it is not only in cases of free camps but even in cases of paying patients, the treatment meted out to them is no better.

You, Dr Dinshaw, and most of your senior colleagues must have travelled far and wide. Why can't you train up your staff and doctors to come up to the level of service and dedication you find in, say, the UK and the US?

I sincerely hope that you will be able to bring in substantial improvement in the outlook of all your staff.

Yours truly,

**Hemendra A.Mehta. 34, Vikram Apartments, Gokhale Road (S), Mumbai 400 028. May 03, 2002**

## Did you have an unpleasant experience with your doctor -- or your patient?

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## Rights violations in population policies

*We reproduce, below, extracts from a letter written to Justice JS Varma Chair, National Human Rights Commission New Delhi. The complete letter, with annexures, can be read on [www.medicalethicsindia.org](http://www.medicalethicsindia.org).*

...One undoubtedly positive feature of the [National Population Policy 2000] is that it resolutely affirms the "commitment of the government towards voluntary and informed choice and consent of citizens while availing of reproductive health care services, and continuation of the target free approach in administering family planning services".

It is thus profoundly disturbing that several State governments have announced population policies, which, in very significant ways, violate the letter and the spirit of the NPP.

Press reports (*Outlook*, April 29, 2002, *Hindustan Times*, April 23, 2002) indicate that, instead of preventing these distortions, the Union cabinet is considering a "Strategy Paper" to review the national family welfare programme and policy, which also violates the spirit of the NPP.

We would also like to bring to your notice...the Uttar Pradesh Population Control Bill, 2002 [which] codifies all the anti-human rights features of the State Population Policies that we have referred to...

You would notice that the State population policies contain a series of disincentives and incentives that are anti-women, anti-adviasis, anti-dalit and anti-poor in general...

1. The disincentives proposed, such as denying ration cards and education in government schools for the third child, withdrawal of a range of welfare programmes for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes with more than two children, debarring such people from government jobs, etc, are questionable on various grounds... Imposition of the two-child norm, and the disincentives proposed, would thus mean that significant sections among those already deprived populations would bear the brunt of the state's withdrawal of ameliorative measures, as pitifully inadequate as they are.

2. The two-child norm bars large sections of dalits, adviasis and the poor in general from contesting elections to the PRIs and thus deprives them of their democratic rights. Further, in the States where they have been imposed... we are aware of substantial numbers of women who have been deserted, or forced to undergo sex-selective abortions...

3. ... Reflecting deprivation, the dalits, adviasis and Other Backward Castes bear a significantly higher proportion of the mortality load in the country ... Instead of dealing with the causes for these differentials, what the state population policies seek to do is to punish victims for their poverty and deprivation.

4. The proposals violate several fundamental rights, the Directive Principles of the Constitution of India, as well as several international Covenants to which India is signatory...

We are astonished to learn that the Union Cabinet could