

## Honouring the Healers

# TAKE A MOMENT TO SAY “THANK YOU”

DR. KAMINI A. RAO

First of July, the birth date of Prof BC Roy India's most eminent physician, is the day we recognise the efforts and hard work of the medical profession. Most physicians go into medicine with an altruistic spirit committed to helping people. They are proud of their ability to diagnosis and treat, grateful for the ability to improve the lives of others, and inspired by the opportunity to make a difference. Doctors undergo years of training, earn their qualifications, get a license to practice medicine and ensure that they keep their knowledge updated all through their professional career.

Most doctors choose to do medicine because they believe it is worthwhile and noble; an opportunity to help people! All too often these efforts of doctors go unnoticed.

Healthcare today is more complex than ever. With technological advancements, the internet and all forms of information at patient's fingertips, doctors, today, are a beleaguered lot. Corporatisation and medical litigation have become the bane of every doctors life!

Commercialisation of medicine today has ensured that the profession has moved from a caring and compassion based 'noble enterprise' to a 'business'. While in the earlier days doctors were concerned about their patients and talked in terms of compassion, caring, and concern, the advent of corporatisation has ensured that 'patient care' has been replaced by 'clients', 'numbers', 'volume', 'targets' and 'revenues'.

Corporatisation has destroyed the foundation and traditions of ethical medical practice and put profitability before patient care. Those doctors who try to oppose the system of illegal practices



and refuse to maximise profitability are invariably crushed and pushed out.

The fundamental problem lies in the fact that doctors are not trained in even the most basic management principles in medical school, highlighting the need for management professionals to run large hospitals. Enter the management 'gurus' and their executives with their flashy jargon and fat salaries ensuring profits first and patients next.

Today, we live in an age where patients are better informed than ever about medical matters; in an age where the 'language of human

rights' is widely spoken. The changing landscape of modern health care is reshaping medical practices leading to a rapidly deteriorating patient-doctor relationship.

The doctor - patient relationship has turned into a virtual 'consumer provider' service. At every interaction between the two, the doctor suspects a potential litigant in the patient and the patient in turn firmly believes that a second or even third opinion from different doctors is unavoidable. There is also a growing propensity amongst patients and their relatives that any adverse outcome must have been a result of an error:

There may be an adverse maternal or perinatal event even without negligence but a tendency exists to still blame the doctor or hospital for negligence.

Willful neglect, laxity and lack of knowledge are some of the accusations made against doctors, the emotional costs of which are colossal. The sceptre of litigation has driven doctors to take every available step to protect themselves and this includes utilizing every conceivable diagnostic tool. The bottom line finally is 'sky rocketing' medical costs, which finally is to be borne by the patient. This continuing trend, will in

the end, endanger not only our fraternity but also patient care at large.

This Doctors Day, I appeal to all people — take this opportunity to thank your physician for stepping up and responding to all your late night phone calls, for working long hours when your child was sick, for his / her tireless service, sacrifice and dedication whenever you were in need!

*(The author is Medical Director at Milann, a hospital which provides IVF Treatment in the city)*



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