

## Professionalism in Medicine-----in the Modern Era

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**M**edical sciences have had a great impact on our daily lives. Medicine is based on an agreement of trust, a contract between medical personnel with the patients and society. Hippocrates and Maimonides oaths of medical ethics were a form of social contract that partially codified what patients and society should expect from the physician.<sup>1,2</sup> Medicine is a profession, in which a doctor's knowledge, clinical skills, and judgment are placed in the service of protecting and restoring human well-being. Healthcare personnel deliver their knowledge of medicine to the society after achieving expertise by training, using facilities those are based on scientific methods.

Professionalism is at the foundation of medical practice, an essential component of medicine that deals with society and provides the keystone for safe, effective and ethical health care practice. It is the daily expression of the desire to help people and society as a whole by providing quality health care to those in need. Thereby, it involves consistently achieving high standards, both in the work you do and the way you behave. The elements of professionalism include humanity, accountability, responsibility, excellence, obligation, honesty, integrity, and respect for others.<sup>3</sup>

Based on this evidence, we need to do not only to generate good decisions for our patients, but also need to apply those decisions in a way that is practiced and ultimately maintains our patient. In the early part of medical education, certain behaviors of physician's activity correlate with

unprofessional behaviors. For that reason, physicians are expected to improve in professionalism with training and experience. Jordan Cohen made the statement: "The physician expertise is defined not only by what he or she must know and do, but most importantly by a thoughtful intelligence of what the physician must be."<sup>4</sup>

In 1975, Holye defined professionalism as 'those strategies and rhetoric employed by members of an occupation in seeking to improve status, salary and condition.'<sup>5</sup> In his another work, he states that professionalism is related to the improvement in the quality of service rather than the enhancement of status.<sup>5</sup>

Medical doctors are approved a license to do their daily professional practice following years of study and meticulous assessment system. Licensure is granted on the understanding that doctors will apply their knowledge and skills as per the necessities of their patients. For doing so, they place those needs ahead of other considerations, most remarkably self-interest. The understandings thus explore generate trust between the medical profession, patients, and society. The smooth functioning of a modern healthcare system cannot take place in the absence of trust. In addition, the unpleasant experience of healthcare systems is that, many doctors are no longer conveyed their trusted service as an immediate reminder of the society. Medical professionalism stands on the establishment of trust to create an interconnecting linkage among physicians,

patients, and society, that determines medicine's importance and responsibilities in the care of patient for developing public health.<sup>5</sup> It continues to be a basic responsibility of physicians in the care of patients. Sir William Osler made the point, "the good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient who has the disease."<sup>6</sup>

There has been radical modification in medicine over the last several decades, from the private independent practitioner to the organization of common group physicians, to a union-oriented corporate group of physicians, often employed by hospitals and systems.

In modern era, professionalism is in jeopardy by issues of self-interest, power, prestige, profit, pride, privilege, and lifestyle. Venality, behavior deficit, irresponsibility, and self-indulgence can be the underlying factors for immoral behavior. The commoditization of health care as a product, results from the legitimization of profit, competition, and self-interest inherent in a free-market economy in which medicine is regarded as just another product or commodity. Professionalism is the most valuable commodity of medicine.<sup>17</sup>

Medical organizations often struggle for increased profits and competencies by decreasing costs and increased effectiveness. This causes a conflict between medical professionalism, the ethics, and values of business. A physician's professional value is now measured in productivity----how many patients can be scheduled and quickly seen.<sup>8</sup>

Medical educators and leaders of health systems have enormous opportunities to shape the professional development of learners. Educational development and professional identity formation of learners through careful attention to life-long learning principles, self-directed learning, and reflection are important foundations of professionalism education.<sup>9</sup>

Teaching institutions can play a vital role by recognizing and awarding role model teachers so that students will be able to pay a visit to those individuals and identify the qualities that they should possess in their future medical practices as professional doctors.

Professionalism should be taught explicitly following cognitive base - a definition of profession, the attributes of the professional, and the relationship of medicine to the society which it serves. Physicians are expected to improve their different components of professionalism by means of training and experience. Later on, those expertise features of professionalism may broaden the health personnel's attitudes and behaviors during their daily professional activities.

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