

## Why Sudden Emphasis on the Importance of Communication

The ideal attitude for treating patients should be based on evidence. However, some doctors fail to stay updated on recent advancements. Surprisingly, they also survive in society. They not only survive, rather there are several cases where it is seen that they gain a higher reputation and faith of patients than the ideal doctor who does evidence-based practice.

Way back in 1999, Isaac D and Fitzgerald<sup>1</sup> narrated seven types of approaches by doctor.

*They are*

- **Eminence dependant approach**—in this type, the doctor, with their age factor, grey hair, and grave face impresses on the patient that that experience trumps evidence
- **Vehemence-dependant approach**—these doctors, with their loud, rough, and forcefully assertive approach try to brush aside evidence-based medicine.
- **Eloquence dependant approach**—in this tailor-made, customized elegance and verbal eloquence the doctor gains the confidence of the patient.
- **Providence dependant approach**—this type of doctor leaves all negative outcomes as the will of the Almighty.
- **Diffidence dependant approach**—the doctor lacks self-confidence and does nothing from a sense of despair.
- **Nervousness dependant approach**—fear factor dominates the approach. They are apprehensive that at any moment consumer council, with the allegation of medical negligence will pounce on them. Their concentration is more on the

doctor's safety than on treating the patient. At this point, my personal view is, keeping oneself safe from a legal angle is good but not at the cost of neglecting the patient.

- Confidence-dependant approach—The act of overconfidence and boldness in treating the patient. For them, evidence-based medicine goes for a toss.

The approach of the doctor to the patient depends on which category he falls under. Whatsoever the way, the doctor could garner unconditional faith from the patient. It was because, despite all deficiencies, one thing they knew well was excellent communication and rapport building.

Till Mid-60 the doctor-patient relationship was based on this faith. The patient had unshakable faith in the doctor's capability. They felt that the doctor would not do anything, which will harm the patient's wellbeing. The doctor used to be like a part of their family. The doctor knew the patient's financial capability and tried to treat them in a way to fit into their budget. While prescribing some procedure that shoots above the budget, the doctor will also discuss it with the patient and his family. The patients used to strongly believe that the costly test is required or else it wouldn't have been advised by the doctor. In case of the most unfortunate outcome, the relatives used to blame their fate. Never ever they will point their accusing finger toward the doctor.

In the doctor-patient relationship, the faith was two-way. The doctor believed that the patient will religiously follow the instruction and the patient believed that the doctor will not harm the patient knowingly. There was no hidden trick to make it happen. This happened due to the excellent communication skill of the doctor. Over the period of time, for various reasons, this skill has blunted and patients had their reasons for retracting the faith they showered in the doctor. There are various reasons for the same and those all are enumerated in the following chapters.

Over the years, there is a dramatic change in the scenario. Mistrust in doctors has slowly crept in. People are more consumer attitude oriented. They feel doctors as sellers and patients as customers. At the doctors' end, they are now more

compartmentalized, commercial, high technology oriented, and try to play safe.

Under these changed scenarios, there should be more thrust and emphasis on effective communication. The vanishing art should be revived fast.

To analyze the cause of the widening gap between doctor-patient relationships, the following points will help.

- **Mistrust:** The attitude of mutual trust and faith is gradually disappearing globally. Starting from nation to nation, it has percolated all aspects of society. A patient doctor relationship cannot be an exception. It has also fallen in line with the universal trend. Even in the medical profession, there is doctor to doctor mistrust
- **Use of Hi-tech costly equipment for diagnosis/treatment:** Like in all other sciences, there is also a huge leap forward in terms of technology in medical sciences. For pin point accurate diagnosis, the doctor relies upon these tests, and that broadens the gap of trust between doctor and patient. The patient thinks that the doctor could have clinically diagnosed it but has done the test for no reason.
- **Legal angle:** Presently the treatment of patients comes under the consumer protection act. While the patients get treated and few relatives take care of the patient, a good number of relatives and friends will be busy finding points by which they can sue the doctor. As a matter of safety, the doctor tries to ensure that there is no deficiency in treatment. For that reason, he overdoes on treatment. Even if he clinically diagnoses a patient having tension headaches, he will do an MRI and CT Scan. It is because his diagnosis has a one in one lakh percent chance of proving wrong. Contrary to the clinical diagnosis done by the doctor, the case can turn out to be suffering from a Brain Tumour. The doctor does not want to take chance and invite a charge of Negligence.
- **Easy access to information from web search engines and social media:** Nowadays social media participation is considered a way of life. Similarly gathering information through web searches is a national pastime.

There is no harm in these activities. It makes people knowledgeable and socially aware.

The problem lies in the fact that from the huge storehouse of diamonds and diamond-looking cut glass, people pick up the latter. They get confused about which is correct information and which is unauthentic data. They gather ill-founded information about the medical condition of their relative and confront the doctor.

- **Ill-founded information about organ transplant:** The noble thought of organ transplant is awakening many people and the system is getting momentum. The process and protocol of organ transplant are well-defined and meticulous with almost zero scopes of foul play. It is practically impossible to remove an organ from a person without following the laid-out protocol. If the crime is identified, the hospital will face a major criminal charge.

Despite the system being in vogue, many people whose relative is critically ill and hospitalized think that the patient is targeted by the hospital to remove an organ. The hospital management will place it in another person who has paid a huge amount to the hospital for the transplant.

All these points are discussed in detail in the chapter 'Communicating with the patient in ICU'. In that chapter, some more points related to mistrust are enumerated. Those scenarios are typical for the Intensive Care Setup.