

Editorial

Legal and Ethical Challenges in Healthcare Ecosystem

In recent times the print and social media is galore with adverse news regarding health sector such as doctor-pharma nexus, violence against doctors, medical negligence, cost of drugs/stents, kidney marriages, surrogacy and so on. Prime issues such as doctor-patient ratio, availability of health infrastructure, funding of healthcare system, etc. are generally not addressed. Healthcare industry is growing rapidly, however, some core ingredients such as care, compassion, empathy, trustworthiness and ethical considerations are losing their position of priority. We live in a well-informed society, where patients, relatives, and others are inclined to question healthcare providers if medical outcomes are not appropriate/acceptable. Ethics is considered as a standard of behavior and a concept of right and wrong in any situation. The primary principles of ethics include beneficence, non-maleficence, justice and respect for autonomy. There are legal and ethical dilemmas associated with delivery of healthcare. It is imperative for healthcare professionals to be well conversant with law and ethics—the pillars of healthcare ecosystem. The evolving technologies pose new challenges to the established tenets of medical practice. These challenges often involve social issues and ethical dilemmas with decisions affecting life and its continuity. Recent emerging issues include reproductive rights, fetal health, stem cell research, Euthanasia, do not resuscitate and confidentiality of records in cyber domain. Healthcare professionals need to be concerned about how law and ethics impact not only their respective professions, but also how these issues affect the consumers and society at large. Spiralling cost of healthcare impacts availability, accessibility, affordability and equitable distribution of healthcare resources. It is thus the felt need to introspect and understand the need for these relevant contemporary legal and ethical issues.

Healthcare professionals are generally never exposed to most of these issues in our undergraduate or postgraduate training. This places them in a disadvantageous position wherein if faced with issues requiring actions on essential administrative matters appropriate inputs are not available to facilitating decision making.

The Indian healthcare industry is progressing towards an upward brighter phase as the industry is seen to be growing at a rapid pace and is expected to become a US\$280 billion industry by 2020. Technology is playing a major role in changing the way healthcare was perceived and delivered. Indian health industry is metamorphosing from traditional to modern, from being concentrated at large places to marking its presence in far flung small tehsils and villages.

It is essential to understand that medical science is not prototype assembly line driven as in Industries nor can a specific model be typecast and replicated. The alert ecosystem expects the quality of care to be global, hence the necessity of adhering to global standards of quality in terms of both infrastructure and training resources.

It is imperative that a structured programme is planned on issues pertaining to legal and ethical challenges in healthcare and incorporated in medical curriculums. It is time that the common populace is made sensitive to the challenges in healthcare delivery including Legal and Ethical issues.

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