

Bioethics in Medical education: Editorial

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Abstract

Ethics in Medicine is also about reminding the doctors about their privileges and how to give back. Bioethics is now a mandatory part of the undergraduate curriculum and this issue of Reflections gives a glimpse about what constitutes bioethics.

In my opinion Ethics is best defined as ‘do not unto the patient what you would not have done unto you’. I can even give a few examples to test this definition.

- I would not want my physician to take free samples from pharmaceutical companies for ultimately it is not the company that foots the bill but the patient.
- I would wish my doctor gives me respect and time even if I appear rustic and poor.
- Alternatively, I would wish that my doctor should not see me out of turn just because
- I am well-heeled and well-connected and put the ‘not so fortunate’ to greater discomfort because of me.
- I would consider donating my body for research only if I see a change in the attitude of the students who take benefit from my body.
- As a patient, I have enough troubles of my own to offer my troubles for case discussion. I would not like to be used unless I am appreciated for doing so...in words and kind.

Yet, I am uncertain that these definitions of Ethics ‘do not unto the patient what you would not have done unto you’ is the final answer to the debate on what constitutes ethics. The field of genetic studies is a fertile ground for such debates. Advocates for genomic experimentation argue that the primary moral goal for today’s bioethics can be summarised in a single sentence ‘Get out of the way’. According to them, a truly ethical bioethics should not thwart research that has likely benefits now or in future under sweeping principles like ‘dignity’, ‘sacredness’ or ‘social justice’. The Hippocratic aphorism ‘Primum non nocere’ would be very difficult to follow in letter and spirit, else I would never prescribe penicillin for syphilis as it may cause anaphylaxis, even low dose aspirin in coronary artery disease can cause gastrointestinal bleeding, vaccination in children would never have been approved and so on. Ethics in Medicine is also about reminding the doctors about their privileges and how to give back. Bioethics is now a mandatory part of the undergraduate curriculum and this issue of Reflections gives a glimpse about what constitutes bioethics.