

Guest Editorial

Dentists should put Themselves into the Shoes of the Patients and Walk

Recently, a final year BDS student has asked the teacher in the clinic 'In the clinical examination, only the maxillary impression is asked for. Then, why should I learn the different steps of making complete dentures.' This probably can be ignored as a foolish question, raised by a novice. The sad fact is that the student is unable to comprehend the fact that he is going to be the part of a noble profession. But such a question was never asked by a student, a quarter century ago. The student who opted for dentistry was fully aware of the fact that, during his lifetime, he is going to treat many patients and relieve the suffering. In the course of training, the student is expected to develop a trait which includes the following:



- Behaves respectfully to everyone he meets
- Demonstrates professional and ethical behavior
- Compassion and empathy while extending care to the patients
- Displays effective communication and listening skills and develops rapport with the patients
- Explains to the patient about the diagnosis and treatment plan and makes an effort to assure patient comprehension while respecting the patients' point of view
- Demonstrates cultural sensitivity in working with patients and their family belonging to diverse backgrounds
- Displays competence in scientific endeavors
- Willing to help others and, when necessary, willing to seek help from others
- Seeks and accepts criticism in an attempt to improve performance
- Readiness to self-evaluation of his/her skills
- Sensitive to the patients' psychological well-being
- Displays concern for the welfare of the community and engages in volunteer activities.

These days, treating the patient as a human being is not well perceived by the student. Humanistic vision in the treatment is reduced to a mere jargon which the student seldom understands. The word empathy has to be explained by the teachers. Very often the teachers do not perceive the meaning of empathy as the ability to understand another person's circumstances, point of view, thoughts and feelings. There should be a concerted effort from the part of teachers to mould the students as good human beings. They should be reminded that dental professional has a bounden responsibility to provide health care to the patient. It is often doubted that the commercial angle of our profession very often supersedes the humanistic angle. Johanna Shapiro, a Professor of family medicine, has pointed out that when someone is sick, disabled, in pain, hurt or dying, he expects an altruistic impulse from the doctor. In other words, the doctor must draw closer to the patient, putting the interests of other above those of self, even at some sacrifice to oneself. One of the major tasks of medical educators is to help maintain and increase trainee empathy for patients. The curriculum of dental education provides a well thought out knowledge and skill profiles. But the attitude profile is not well worked out. Can we dental teachers seriously think of the right attitude, our students should develop and be role models?

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