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EDITORIAL

WHERE ARE WE GOING ?

Health awareness is definitely a low priority in our country but then, the trend that we see is very dangerous. Stress of life has increased so much, the urbanites are its victim and if the trend continues it won't take long to overtake the rural population.

The patient is becoming the guinea-pig of a specialist. Pain in abdomen in a case takes about eight to ten days before completing the necessary tests and treatment to start. Patient has to patiently bear the pain till then. Undergoing all the tests often regarded as customary with many has attained a status symbol. The electro cardiography, the x-ray, and the routine blood chemistry has become the thing of the past; the latest is SMA₁₂, sonography, CAT scan, brain scan and the whole body scan. No one seems to understand the nature and the extent of the diseases unless these are carried out to the specialist's satisfaction. All these techniques from the Western countries where they are now experiencing the hazards of these high skilled technology, have slowly percolated to the common man in our cities. It is evident that the type of physicians that are turned out through our medical colleges have oriented themselves to this thinking (they are taught that way) and slowly simple aids like stethoscope, thermometer, hammering rod and tuning fork would become obsolete. The clinical acumen developed through critical observation, a strong quality of doctors of yester-years is not available now. We are really in a computer age. Our doctors are becoming computer programmers with a data bank ready to spit out the treatment. You get the wrong data, your remedy and course of treatment also goes wrong. This type of medical education is not required in our country where 80% of the population cannot afford this expensive luxury of diagnostic methods. Who will revamp the medical education? The pity is every expert in the field feels that the knowledge of his subject is essential to become a doctor.

Prevention is better than cure, so the saying goes; but who cares for prevention when antibiotics are available in plenty. In fact, the entire medical studies should devote more time in teaching public health care, and preventive medicine. These two subjects have not received adequate importance

because it has no glamour attached to it. I know some specialists who call them a sanitary inspector's courses. Medical science has advanced to the extent of preventing T.B., malaria, filaria, typhoid, polio etc. Yet we cannot eradicate them. Why? How many of us notify, the notifiable diseases? How many of us instruct the patient to observe, the right type of diet, exercise and other necessary regimen apart from the treatment that we prescribe? How many are aware that x-ray can be dangerous and hazardous. But then any number of x-ray clinics are present in the thickly populated areas. Hardly any precautions are observed against accidental radiation to innocent people around. Is this ethics? Public health departments are least bothered to correct the malady. How often we advise patients to have their x-rays repeated knowing well that too frequent exposures are hazardous. Surgery we say is advanced a lot. Yes, it is a fact. Surgical techniques have improved reducing the risk rate. But we find, often patients are advised for operation of their appendix, tonsils, piles, stones etc. when actually they could have been medically treated. We, as homoeopaths, hold a view that such surgery is not conducive to the system but is detrimental. But it is always claimed, it is done in the best interest of the patients.

The reason for writing this is only to remind ourselves as to where are we going? Whatever we practise, we are physicians first and our duty towards the community is not just prescribing but much more than that; we must teach ourselves compassion, a commodity that is fast disappearing from the commercial world; that human feelings for each other must be observed, we must teach ourselves public health care, prevention methods, diets etc. Many of these diseases that we see today are man-made, a curse of modernisation, and industrialisation. We can be true physicians only when we achieve the qualities of a true physician with compassion.

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