

Ethical Review to the movie 'The Doctor'

By Randa Hairnes.

The story is built around a heart surgeon named Dr. Jack McKee who is successful in his knowledge and skills but lacks in emotional care towards the patient. He treats the patients as names on the list and doesn't attend to their emotional aspects. Here the film highlights on several ethical issues and moral principles. Medical ethics is a system of moral principles that apply values and judgments to the practice of medicine which help the doctor to decide what is morally right. Basic principles of medical ethics are respect for autonomy (respect the patient's ability to take decisions on behalf of themselves), beneficence (do good), non-maleficence (do no harm), and justice (treat equitably and distribute benefits fairly).

Moreover the film highlights what is expected from medical professionalism. Medical professionalism means, the habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical skills, clinical reasoning, emotions, values and reflection in daily practice for the benefit of the individual and community being served. Some of these qualities are not present in Dr. McKee's character. So the story shows how the doctor undergoes a change in his views and attitudes towards the patients after being a patient with malignant throat tumor.

As the movie starts it gives an idea on the situation in the theatre, it is casual with loud music, chattering and laughing among the crew which is not suitable for such place. Even outside the theatre the doctor seems cold towards the personal problems of the patients. When addressing the trainees also he tells that personal feelings have nothing to do with the science of patients. He doesn't think how these patients suffer emotionally by being sick.

As the story goes the doctor comes to a turning point in his life. He get examined due to episodes of coughing up blood and found to have a growth in his throat. It was suspected to be a tumor. Then his life changes. He has to see doctors, undergo various investigations and he begins to feel the sorrow of being a patient. Though he was a skillful surgeon, he too feels fear and gets nervous on his disease as an ordinary person. His life begin to face problems. He gets tempered when he treats same as a mere patient in the same hospital he works. He has to fill forms, wait in queues, dress in gowns to undergo investigations which annoys him. At the beginning he expects to treat him as a doctor not a patient though he is a patient. But with time he understands the situation.

His biopsy report comes as malignant and plans to give radiotherapy and if it will not successful need to be excised which may lose his voice. He experiences his life as a patient with cancer, the film very well depicts how his mood changes with these bad news. He first gets treatments by a female dental surgeon who is also cold and impersonal. Her character also highlights ethical issues to think. She too only consider her duty and less care on the responsibilities of Dr. Mackie as a heart surgeon. Doesn't even try to change her time to suit his work. So her character shows the need of flexibility in doctors when it is reasonable. At the radiotherapy unit Dr. Macke meets a lady, Ms. June the one who changes the doctor's

attitudes towards the patients. She is a patient diagnosed with end stage brain cancer, who is trying to face the life bravely. From her the doctor gets much better view of the delays and missteps of doctors as she was diagnosed late though presented early to the doctors. When he first meets her he gives story of a patient who had a cancer same as her and later revealed that there was no such patient, which makes her somewhat angry and later she gets to promise him never lie or mislead a patient again. This is the first time the doctor grows close to a patient.

The film shows how happy the doctor when he gets to know that the tumor has not spread to the lymph nodes, he wants to celebrate it even. Then he was told the tumor need to be excised as it is not responding to radiotherapy and his mood gets changed to a nervous patient. He experiences the feelings of a hopeless patient. He is in fear of losing his voice. He cannot sleep properly and go to meet Ms. June even at night who is actually an emotional relieve to him.

Next day he sees the death of his friend Ms. June. He feels sorry her and try to be with her in her last few minutes. These situations makes the doctor more human. So the writer tries the best to show what is needed to the patient from a doctor other than his skills using Dr. Macke's character. At the end the doctor undergoes a surgery and has to stay at his home with transient loss of voice for some time. There too he experiences the difficulties a patient need to undergo in recovery period. He gets recovered with good outcome, he gains his voice though it becomes bit hoarse.

He returns the hospital with a doctor with same skills and knowledge but with changed attitudes towards the patients. That is the character which suits the hospital. The situation in the theatre becomes more patient friendly. Once when trainees mention there is a terminally ill patient, the doctor tells there are no terminal ill patients only the patients who are dead or alive. He becomes more emotionally caring to the patients. Not only advising he makes his staff to wear as patients and undergo different investigations to feel the experience by themselves which leads to change their views also.

So the film very well highlights the importance of both physical and mental care towards the patient, what sort of qualities a doctor must practice to be a medical profession. Also how important the medical ethics to protect the rights of the patient. So this is an interesting film where the writer has successful in highlighting some ethical issues in medical practice, how complex those are and medical ethics too help to protect the rights of both the doctor and the patient other than knowledge and skills in medicine.

H. Ruwani Samanthika

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