

Learning medical ethics through cinema

'The Doctor'

The film is about a doctor who once experienced a patient's feelings with a laryngeal carcinoma. He himself, his professional colleagues, family and people who are around him are giving a good message to health professionals in this film.

Dr. MacKee is a surgeon who is not very much serious about anything but of course doing his job well in curing patients. He is a well experienced and a talented surgeon so takes his job lightly. He talks about surgeries with his colleagues as "A surgeon's job is to cut. You go in, fix it and get out" He is not thinking much about patient's feelings, involving with them or caring other than curing them medically and surgically. But while he is experiencing time as a patient, he sees the same hospital environment differently. It makes him think and see things in a patient's point of view. He realizes the stress in a patient's mind and importance of both physical and mental support the patient needs. He gradually changes to a doctor with more humanity from a doctor who was doing his job as curing patient's diseases. He tried to give this important fact to his colleagues by letting them experiencing an occasion as patients with investigations, hospital clothes, hospital foods etc. He asked them to have those investigations which they are going to order patients in some day. This will stop them from ordering many unnecessary, painful investigations.

While he was admitted in the hospital Dr MacKee gets a wrong treatment which is prescribed for another patient. This gives an important message to health care careers. Before any investigation or treatment, patient should be checked several times whether this is the correct treatment for correct patient. If not, it may be harm or even more threatening to patients. Under basic principles of medical ethics, non-maleficence describes this as 'do no harm' to any person.

At some occasions Dr. MacKee has insulted his colleagues. It is not something should happen from a professional and it comes under professional misconduct. A professional should comment on colleagues honestly and unnecessary comments should be avoided.

Dr. MacKee expects special attention from hospitals and other doctors who are treating him as he is a doctor. But as a medical professional, his major object should be to use his skills, knowledge, communication and emotion etc for benefit of patients as individuals and for community. It is not nice to seek special attention and benefits in the sake of profession but to work in order to make a good service using profession.

In order to supply a good service, a doctor should be in a good condition both physically and mentally. But here Dr. MacKee does not take others advices to take rest and keep away from

medical tasks which need concentration mainly because of his overconfidence. But a doctor should think of his patients and should avoid any harm can occurred from him. This is important in both beneficence and non maleficence described in medical ethics.

Miss June Ellis, the friend Dr.MacKee meets at the cancer unit gives another important message about professional misconduct: medical negligence. She is a patient diagnosed with a brain tumour and she complains that she was not diagnosed early and it is medical negligence. A health care career should do everything for the benefit of patients as much as possible – in management of patients, history taking, examination, investigations and treatments etc. to fulfill these requirements doctor should have an updating knowledge and should act according to the occasion quickly and correctly.

When the Dr.Abbot, the ENT doctor tells about the diagnosis of the laryngeal carcinoma to Dr.MacKee, she tells that he can get a second opinion if wants. This confirms autonomy of the patient which is to give right to the patient to take decisions.

As a whole this film gives an idea about how to become a good doctor. A doctor's major role is to cure patients, treat them to become physically well. In order to fulfill that task, a medical graduate should have an updating knowledge, good practiced technical skills, communication skills etc.

Along with the curing part, a doctor should address the patient in mental well being also. Patients are also humans who are not well with some problem. So doctors have to treat patients not the diseases. Humanity is as important as any other drug treatment so doctors should be more humane. While giving drugs and surgeries they should get mental satisfaction also. Always doctors should think the way patient sees about their condition: "if I was this patient how will I feel all these examination, investigations, countless drugs, surgeries etc," if a doctor thinks like this he will give a good service to patients. Kindness, trust, caring consolation, counseling are some good virtues to practice as doctors.

Medical ethics make a good doctor who have both of those aspects; curing and caring. There are four main basic principles; autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice. Patients having the right to take decisions on their own about their lives, giving medical advices to support that decision, giving medical consent, giving correct information on their condition, always do good, do no harm, treat all patients in a same way etc. are described by those principles. As a medical professional he should prevent from professional misconduct. In patient care and treatment, professional privileges, personal behavior, acting with professional colleagues, advertising, a doctor should act according to professional conduct.