

# The Doctor

One can argue that a mechanic's job and a doctor's job are pretty much the same thing. "You go in, fix it and get out" 'The Doctor', a 1991 drama film directed by Randa Haines contradicts the above argument in the most heart touching manner possible.

Partially based on the novel by Edward Rosenbaum, 'A Taste of My Own Medicine' the story revolves around Doctor John McKee. Dr. McKee is a surgeon and one of the best of its kind. He has a successful career, a successful social life and successful family life until he's struck by a laryngeal carcinoma. He survives the misfortune and finds wisdom on his way out.

Dr. McKee, despite being a skilled a surgeon, is one of those who see no difference between a mechanic's job and a doctor's job and it is him that I have quoted in my opening sentence. His only concern is his job as a surgeon; no more, no less. In doing so, he forgets that patients are with hearts and souls. He delivers them of their bodily pains but never the pains that were brought about by their worries.

Then he is diagnosed with laryngeal carcinoma and goes through all the mental turmoil just like any other patient. He fears death or having to lose his voice in the least, the fate of his wife and the child if he were to die. On top of it the very hospital that he used to work in treats him like an average cancer patient. With worries preoccupying his thoughts, his pride deeply hurt, he grows distant from his wife too and this makes him even more miserable. At a time like this he meets the brain cancer patient June Ellis. From her, he learns what it is like to wait for death to come. He learns to look at the life of a patient in a different angle. June dies, Dr McKee survives but the experience brings him to enlightenment.

He realizes what every doctor should realize; Treat your patient the way you want yourself to be treated. The patient is not an object that you need to work on but another human being with body and soul, and the treatment should also include attending to his worries and setting his mind at peace. The film also shows the type of worries a patient might cater, through the different patients that we come across in the movie. There's a female patient who is worried about the impact an ugly surgical scar is going to have on her relationship with her husband. June mourns over the things that she wanted to do but might never have the chance to do. Then there's Dr. McKee whose many worries make the most of the story. If we, as medical professionals take a moment to reflect we will realize that every single patient that we came across in our career had some sort of a worry because of the illness, that gave him a sleepless night. Illness itself is a disturbing thing to everybody. Sometimes their doctor is the only person capable of delivering them of their worries. One kind word would cure a patient better than a dozen of medications.

The film shows how Dr. McKee emerges out of his misfortune as a different man. Before the illness Dr. Mackee's ward rounds were very loud with him making jokes about patients and everything else in general along with his junior members. But the film shows how he changes for the better. For those of us who regards patients as 'cases' he gives a good answer during one of his ward rounds in response to one of his junior doctors. 'There are no terminals, only dead and alive patients' He earns his patients the respect they deserve from the doctor. The common mistake we make in our career is believing that the patients are at our mercy and we are superior to them. In doing so, we tend to forget the fact that patients are human beings and our equal in that regard. We take it for granted that we can say whatever the things we like to a patient because we are their saviors. Dr. McKee reminds everyone that this is not so. The patient should be able to live with dignity. This little scene in the movie highlights one of the important component of the doctor – patient relationship; respect your patient.

Dr. MacKee realizes that his conduct towards the patients before the illness was not right. His own experience as a patient taught him that and he wants to give the same experience to his team of young doctors. He wants them all to become patients for a day. To go through the burden a patient will have to bear, all the investigations, having to stay away from family and friends, spending the night at the hospital and sharing a room with another patient. He believes that becoming a patient is a must-have experience for a doctor to understand how a patient feels and to change their attitude towards the patients.

The movie also touches on another ethical aspect of the medical profession; respecting the professional colleagues. Dr Bloomfeild is a doctor of very good conduct who is often the subject of the jokes of Dr MacKee and his friends for the attentive manner he adopts in treating patients. But Dr MacKee realizes later on that Dr. Bloomfeild has always been right. His trust for Dr .Bloomfeild grows so strong that ultimately he chooses to become Dr .Bloomfeild's patient for the excision of his laryngeal tumour.

The end of the movie shows how Dr .McKee wins the highest reward a doctor can win during his career; the hearts of his patients. This he achieves by treating them kindly and with concern. Having learnt his life's lesson he also finds peace within. The film helps us see our patients under a new light The film leaves us thinking to ourselves. Has our conduct to patients been desirable? If not, in what way should it change? "Treat them the way you want yourself to be treated" That's what Dr.MacKee would say.

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