

Ethics to be added to new MBBS curriculum

MCI Admits To A Huge Ethics Deficit Among Current Docs As It Moves To Inculcate Values

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: Medical Council of India (MCI) has decided to incorporate "medical professionalism" under the revised MBBS curriculum as ethics is increasingly coming under scrutiny.

As per an MCI note, "Medical ethics and professionalism forms the basis of contact between doctors and society and so it is imperative that professionalism and ethical issues in practice should be incorporated into medical curriculum".

MCI's undergraduate education working group, headed by Professor George Mathew, principal of Christian Medical College in Vellore, has strongly recommended its introduction. Professor Mathew told TOI, "The details are still being finalised. We will formally introduce medical ethics in the curriculum."

Professor Sandeep Guleria, professor of surgery, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), who is member of the working group, added, "There is a huge problem of ethics in

DOCTOR'S DILEMMA

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medical profession. Since ethics is a very important part of medicine, we will introduce lectures formally under the new MBBS curriculum on medical ethics and professionalism."

According to Dr Sita Naik, member of MCI's governing body, the present MBBS curriculum

is very subject specific. Ethics is being not taught because it does not come under any particular subject like anatomy or physiology.

"Earlier, doctors acquired ethics by imbibing from their seniors since the world was a more ethical place. Today, there are a lot of issues revolving around ethics unethical drug trials, unethical organ donations, pharmaceutical-nexus and over prescription of drugs. Hence, would-be doctors should be formally exposed to ethics. Lot of soft skills needs to be taught," Dr Naik said.

According to Dr Naik, the biggest challenge faced by doctors daily is about prescribing drugs. They have to be taught how not to be "influenced by drug companies and make unbiased decisions while prescribing drugs".

"Not all doctors over prescribe drugs because of a nexus with pharma companies. Sometimes, the doctors themselves don't know. That's why taking informed decisions is better than making decisions out of sheer ignorance."

"Doctors will also be taught on issues like

end of life and euthanasia, how to promote organ donation, when is it a right moment to declare a patient brain dead," Dr Naik added.

Prior to its dissolution last year and a new governing body was put in place, MCI had called for an amendment to its professional conduct, etiquette and ethics regulations and recommended various degrees of punishment for doctors who accept gifts from pharmaceutical or allied healthcare companies.

The recommendations also banned sponsorship of travel and lodging of medical practitioners, financial grants by pharmaceutical companies.

"A medical practitioner shall not accept any travel facility inside the country or outside, including rail, air, ship, cruise tickets, paid vacations etc, from any pharmaceutical or allied healthcare industry or their representatives for self and family members for vacation or for attending conferences, seminars, workshops, etc," stated the MCI (Professional Conduct, Etiquette and Ethics) (Amendment) Regulations, 2009.