

MBBS students to learn economics of treatment

Pushpa Narayan | TNN

Chennai: MBBS students will be trained in cost of treatments, healthcare financing and the impact of high medical bills on patients as part of a two-month foundation course, the Medical Council of India (MCI) has decided.

The national summit on medical education in Delhi on Monday also made it mandatory for all medicos from 2012 to learn sociology, ethics, communication and stress management.

Experts felt that medicos were traditionally less informed about the cost of tests and treatments they order for patients. During their course, students learn to prescribe tests and treatments based on their knowledge and scientific evidence. Discussing the cost is often a taboo when the professor and the student discuss treatment during hospital rounds. Thus, most doctors are not aware of cost-effective choices when they start practice.

"After all, doctors aren't just

technicians. We need to teach them to be good humans since many families and schools hardly have the time for it these days," said Delhi-based cardiac surgeon Dr Naresh Trehan.

S Saranya, a post-graduate in radiology, says it would help young doctors like her. "There's no disincentive for ordering costly tests. The hospital has long lists of tests it offers and all we have to do is tick some of the applicable ones," she said.

On Monday, in the presence of Union health minister Gulam Nabi Azad, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) chairman Dr VM Katoch, MCI chairman Dr KK Talwar and representatives from different state governments agreed to introduce the foundation course.

"We want to ensure that students know about the model code and ethics. Unlike other professions, doctors can be penalised for violation of medical ethics. The foundation course is just an introduction and will prompt students to continue discussions during the course," said MCI secretary Sangeetha Sharma.