Trust makes patients adhere to prescribed treatment

Study finds lack of communication as a major cause for dispute between doctors and patients

New Delhi, 20 April 2017: According to a new study of 101 Hispanics and 100 non-Hispanics from the University of California, patients with high blood pressure who had more trust in the medical profession were more likely to take their high blood pressure medicine than those with less trust. The study was presented at the recent American Heart Association’s Quality of Care and Outcomes Research Scientific Sessions 2017 in Arlington, Virginia.

The doctor–patient relationship is the foundation in the practice of medicine. It is a fiduciary relationship; the word "fiduciary" derives from the Latin word for "confidence" or "trust", which forms the basis of an effective doctor–patient relationship. The study conducted also showed that mutual trust is important for positive treatment outcomes. However, in recent times, it is being seen that this trust is slowly eroding away and a doctor–patient relationship is no longer held sacrosanct as it once was.

Speaking on this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, "A patient who does not trust his doctor will not confide in him nor will he be motivated to adhere to the prescribed treatment plan. Modern medicine today is patient-centric and based on partnership. The patient is an equal partner in the diagnostic and therapeutic process. Patients rely on doctors to take care of their health, and therefore, it is important that patients trust their doctors. Doctors must be courteous with their patients and explain the management plan in a language that they are able to understand. This is the concept of informed consent. Patients must in turn show respect towards their doctors and trust their judgment."

The study also concluded that patients who had higher levels of trust in their doctor, and the treatment plan, took their blood pressure medicine 93% of the time versus 82% of the time for those who had lower levels of trust. Additionally, placing trust in the medical profession was linked to greater resilience (ability to adapt to difficult life circumstances) and better health-related quality of life. It also deduced that trust had an equally protective effect on the health of both groups studied regardless of race or ethnic origin.

Dr K K Aggarwal further opined, "Lack of communication is a major cause of disputes between doctors and patients today. This can be tackled by the triad of ‘Plan, Communication, and
Documentation’, where ‘Plan’ means observations and treatment decided by the doctor and if the same is ‘Communicated’ to the patient, ‘Documented’ and then implemented, there can never be a dispute. Any disparity between your plan and the outcome leads to a dispute."

**The following points are key to a successful doctor–patient relationship.**

- Do what you say. For example, if you have told the patient that you would be late by one hour, make sure that it is only one hour and not later than that.
- Document what you speak
- Preserve what you document

**Ends**

**About IMA:** Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2,60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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