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REVIEW ARTICLE

Physician-patient relationship

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Abstract

Doctor-patient relationship in Pediatricas has own peculiarities. Who is called patient is not a child , but the mother, father or the caregiver. In fact , it is with the mother or father who the doctor builds the doctor-patient relationship indeed.

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"What distinguishes a good physician from an average physician is not technical knowledge, but the relationship with the patient" Braulio Luna Pinheiro, former president of the Regional Council of Medicine of the State of São Paulo

The humanization of the physician-patient relationship is extremely important and indispensable. Unfortunately, it is given little attention in the curricula of medical schools, when it should be present at all the stages of medical education and practice, from the initial training and primary care to state-of-the-art care. Finding the balance between technical education and the exercise of humane practices has been a challenge. Looking the patient in the eye is essential to understand his/her anxieties, apprehensions and pains. Unfortunately, this humanist training has not been given the importance it deserves in medical schools, with most of them only valuing excessively technical criteria. At least 30% of curing or caring for patients depends on this relationship, which requires sensibility, humanity, and respect from the physician. Empathy and idealism should be addressed as part of the medical practice in medical courses.

"The physician-patient relationship is fundamental, because it involves professional, moral, and ethical aspects of great importance. It is not a science, it is an art that is learned through the example of the master and perfected over time through everyday conscious practice. It is something difficult to define, something ethereal that is felt but not palpable or quantifiable". It depends on the personal characteristics of both physician and patient, such as their moral, ethical, religious and cultural upbringing, regardless of the social context in which it occurs. It should be taken into account and be part of the "Art of Medicine" in the pursuit of the patient's successful treatment and cure.

In recent decades, although significant technological advances have allowed successful medical diagnoses and treatments, patients' dissatisfaction with physicians has been increasing, mainly as a result of the insensitive, impersonal, and blunt medical assistance. The media increasingly publicize these cases, and the possibility of a malpractice lawsuit for negligence or recklessness as a result of lack of timely communication is a concern. Medical knowledge may be questioned by the patient after he/she searches Doctor Google, which is easily accessible by anyone, before consulting the physician.

In pediatrics, the physician-patient relationship is very specific because the patient is not a child but the mother, the father, or the caretaker. In fact, it is with the mother or the father that the physician actually establishes the physician-patient relationship, which involves three subjects: "In pediatrics the complexity is greater because there is a three-person relationship: the child is, the mother talks about without being, and the physician thinks and decides."

In the American literature, the main causes of patient dissatisfaction are related to difficulties in accessing care (schedules, appointment availability, waiting times, payment method) and medical conduct (attention received, competence, lack of warmth, unfamiliar language, and absence of adequate explanations about the illness and chosen treatment). In our community, criticism of assistance depends on the clients' socioeconomic conditions, on the type of access to healthcare (public or private system).

In a study on parents' assessment of pediatric consultations, three aspects were indicated with regard to patient satisfaction and how to improve the assistance provided:

Availability to inform – quantity and quality of the information given during the consultation.

Interpersonal sensitivity – emotional behaviors that reflect the physician's attention and interest for the child's and parents' feelings and concerns.

Availability for collaboration – the extent to which the physician allows or encourages parents to participate in the consultation by giving their opinions and suggestions.

We pediatricians should be sensitive towards the families that trust us with a growing and developing individual, a person who is very special to them, and offer the love, kindness, and compassion that the child needs, to re-establish the respect and appreciation for our profession.

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