

“Human Dignity and Human Rights” BIOETHICS – letting humans be Rightfully Dignified !!!

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Abstract : Medicine is a branch that has since eras worked only for the welfare and betterment of human survival. Since its inception centuries ago, it has witnessed diverse diseases, diverse outcomes, diverse complications while dealing with the same and diverse response towards it from the mankind. In order to combat these issues, it entered into an era of research that brought in the solutions and better therapeutic outcomes; but on the darker side also ensued complications in terms of the violations of the rights for humans for their survival and also pushed the dignity of their survival in danger. Not only such issues happened to be seen during the research but were also seen in day to day practice of medicine. Its time today to just revitalize an already inherited virtue within us, by revising the need for the study of ‘bioethics’.

Keywords – Bioethics, Human Dignity, Human Rights

I. INTRODUCTION

“to do” or “not to do”; “how to do” and “when to do”; “what to do” and “why to do”... each of us falls prey to such dilemmatic situations; either seldom or more often. The torment in our minds fetches possible solutions all and sundry. Yet, the most manipulative part of human body, the mind, drags itself to the easiest one; the one that shall be easy to do, the one that shall be easy to rationalize, the one that shall return easy gains; however possibly leaving the merits of “dignity” and “rights” for the humans unheeded. Condemn this to be ‘selfishness’ or commend it to be ‘unawareness’?! More aptly to mention is, it’s the unawareness of the morals that one owes towards his fellow humans. More so, now the necessity to pay heed to such morals has ensued due to the upcoming issues of violence of human dignity and rights through the recent past. To encompass such morals, is the word “ethics”;more out of philosophy, less out of practicability, but, thorough largely out of humanity.

II. THE PROFESSION OF MEDICINE NEEDING BIOETHICS

Medicine is a profession considered to be one of the most divine ones. To render its healing powers to the needy has been the sole aim of it and noteworthy is its long journey in doing so through eras consistently. But while paving the path, it had to come across with problems bearing undisclosed solutions; the problems concerned to the newly evolving diseases, to the newly evolving complications and to the newly evolving expectations[1]. And thus to maintain the competency, it entered into a phase called “research”... letting a large burden of queries invade the path of it that promptly demanded the rationalization by ethics. And here entered the term “bioethics”; literally, the ethics of medical and biological research, but figuratively, a word encompassing a very wide arena of professionalism, compassion, competence, laws of the nature and laws of humans, the rights of the individuals and the dignity for survival, the justice, the equality and so on. In simple words, a discipline that combines the biological knowledge with the knowledge of human value system.

III. BIOETHICS IN BRIEF

A call for bioethics represents a necessity which is crucial in thousands of issues, but sometimes actually neglected and even unknown or ignored, and frequently misinterpreted; not everywhere and always clearly conceptualized. Bioethics is the study of morality; careful and systematic reflection on and analysis of moral decisions and behavior, whether past, present or future. The language of morality includes nouns such as

‘rights’, ‘responsibilities’ and ‘dignity’ and adjectives such as ‘good’ and ‘bad’ (or ‘evil’), ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, ‘just’ and ‘unjust’. It basically builds a platform to provide rational criteria for people to decide or behave in some ways rather than others. Simply guiding our minds not to be dragged towards the conventionally easiest solution but towards rationally the most morally justified one. A classic example of bioethical decision is; there’s a single heart available for transplant, but the patients in need are three; an adolescent girl pursuing higher studies, an overly dedicated middle aged school principal who has worked all his life to render the best possible education and values to the society and an old age home lady who has seen all her life with love, affection & humanity. All of them require a heart transplant, but who deserves? Seemingly, each one of them does deserve it, each one of them holds the right to survive and righteously each one of them is enough dignified to be rewarded; but, practically and miserably, only one can be blessed. The dilemma needs a dire way out. While doing so, some of us may try moving out with our gut feeling or desire, some of us with an intuition from within, while rest of us may just try to imitate a similar situation of the past. But will this actually respect the rights and dignity of each of them? A resounding “no”... then in such a situation, only alternative that will stay behind is a decision that shall reap greatest benefit; a decision that shall be rightfully dignified!

IV. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE NEED TO STUDY BIOETHICS

Our individual decisions may be influenced by a large crowd of peripheral elements like our family, friends, the religious preaching and the political clans. These unfortunately rather than lending a helping hand in decision making, at times would become the ends of the rope to play a tug of war on our mind that is already stuck in the land of moral ambiguity. This further reflects the need of a guidance that is well defined. “Bioethics”, has emerged, by facing similar or even dreadful dilemmas and situations in the past and today sums up all its experiences in simpler but extremely obliging principles; like the principle of Deontology (that means the duty towards others), the principle of Consequentialism (that means ‘end’ justifying the ‘means’), the principle of beneficence and non-maleficence and the virtues of compassion, honesty, prudence and justice. Simple to hear, simple to follow, inherited within each one of us, but unfortunately, hardly ever vitalized! [2]

This clearly justifies the need to revitalize the concept of ‘bioethics’ in our minds. The reason for such an important initiative results from two international researches carried by the International Center in 1996 and 2001. The aim of the project was to check whether the lack of proper study of ethics in medical schools was one of the reasons for the deterioration phenomenon in the relationship between doctors and patients. The first research on the importance and quality of education in ethics in medical colleges and faculties all over the world was performed in 110 medical institutes. Statistically, the subject of ethics was found to be taught in 105 (95%) of these institutions. Although, on the face of it, this situation is almost ideal, in actual fact it lends support to a major premise, namely that something must be fundamentally wrong with the methods by which the subject is taught in a considerable number of medical schools and since many physicians fail to practice ethically in spite of their study of, or concerning ethics, the methods by which they have been trained are questionable. Secondly, it appeared that although in 88% of the medical institutions the ethics courses are compulsory, this imposition does not guarantee that students’ conduct will always be guided by ethical values. [3]

Apparently, the findings offered a validation to this logical assumption that the problems stem not so much from the quantity as from the quality of the tuition.[4]

V. CONCLUSION

Revamping bioethics means focusing on the fundamental values of human dignity and human rights, and giving a strong contribute to democracy, justice, public ethics, citizenship, respect of the rules. Bioethics is not “instinctive”; neither can be top-down imposed once for all: it has to be locally and constantly revitalized through frequent occasions for debating and discussing. Let’s attempt at overcoming the immorality; let’s attempt at overcoming the dilemmatic torments concerning humanity; let’s simplify the approach to our resolutions and actions; and; let’s, yield the ‘right to HUMAN DIGNITY’ and shield the ‘dignity of HUMAN RIGHTS’.

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