

A brief note on THE FORUM FOR MEDICAL ETHICS (FME)

Alarmed by the current state of affairs, a group of concerned doctors have formed the FME to focus attention on the need for ethical norms and practices in our profession. The FME fielded a team for election to the Maharashtra Medical Council. (Dr. Kamath narrates this story in our opening essay.) It seeks to form a cohesive organisation of doctors faithful to the principles of ethical medicine. Together we can reinforce those who stay true to these principles, at times against great odds. We also hope to be able to convince those who, for various reasons, have strayed from the straight and narrow path, of the need to mend their ways.

The forum will provide the stage for discussions on ticklish situations (such as the one on page 5) and help evolve a consensus on actions consistent with ethical practice. In time, it hopes to be able to create panels of experts who can produce guidelines and white papers on such topics as renal transplants using unrelated donors, the role of public and private clinics in the treatment of patients with AIDS (acquired immuno-deficiency syndrome), brain death and what constitutes adequate fee for a given medical or surgical procedure.

We also hope to increase awareness of patients on what they should expect from their doctors as a matter of right as well as what the doctor has a right to expect of them. Highlighting rights and responsibilities may be a potent means of ensuring strong public opinion in favour of ethical practices and, at the same time, easing the task of the honest and truthful doctor.

We hope you will find this endeavour worthy of your participation. We are well aware of the pressures of your schedule but hope you will find the necessary time in view of the urgency of the situation and crying need for all of us to put our profession in order.

A membership form is provided on page 10 in this issue for your convenience.

WHY IS THIS NEWSLETTER NECESSARY?

While the FME is in the process of organising periodic activities such as meetings (perhaps on a monthly basis) of study groups on specific subjects, seminars and lectures on relevant topics and burning issues, it is felt that a regular channel of communication between all members will help in furthering our goals. The newsletter will also carry details of proceedings of such meetings for the benefit of those who could not attend and as a permanent record.

The newsletter will not only provide essays, results of surveys and reviews that provide food for thought but will also feature a correspondence column where we can carry on meaningful dialogues, air our grievances, pose problems for which our colleagues may have answers and focus attention on vital issues.

Such an effort can only succeed if there is active participation by many. Please contribute your thoughts and experiences. These could be of help to us and to others.