

Doctors strike - patients die ¹

In an unfolding tragedy of unprecedented dimensions, the ongoing doctors' strike in the city has resulted in the death of six patients in three days.

Patients at the King George Hospital (KGH), with the fond hope of earning a fresh lease on life, breathed their last - unattended. Though the doctors empathise with the plight of the 'poor' patients and admit that providing emergency care is of paramount importance, the promised help has been too late in coming to save precious lives.

Unable to move to private hospitals as they could not afford to pay the hefty fees, the patients stayed put in KGH. Five of the patients died at KGH where the promised emergency help came too late...

Doctors abetting artful dodgers (continued) ²

Two senior doctors of the Lok Nayak Hospital (in Delhi) are under investigation for allegedly fudging hospital records to give a senior Delhi IAS officer, D. C. Sankhla, who has been named as the prime accused in a murder case in Samalkha in Panipat district, a fake alibi. Sankhla, the main accused in the case of murder of Jain, a farmer in Samalkha, claims that he was not in Samalkha on the night in question but had, in fact, been treated at the Lok Nayak Hospital in Delhi then.

Police officials from Samalkha, who visited the Lok Nayak Hospital last week, have recorded the statement of the two doctors who allegedly faked the entry of Sankhla's name in the casualty register to show that he had sought treatment there when, in fact, he had not. Superintendent of Police Sharma said that investigations at the Lok Nayak Hospital indicated that one senior doctor at the hospital who is said to be a close friend of Sankhla, telephoned one of the doctors on duty at the casualty ward that night and asked him to enter the name of D. C. Sankhla in the register maintained there. The treatment card of Sankhla was later backdated on the basis of this entry made in connivance with the hospital staff.

Doctors abetting artful dodgers (continued) ³

The Tamil Nadu Government has instituted disciplinary action against the Government General Hospital's cardiologist Dr. C. V. Bhirmanandam, for false diagnosis of FERA detainee T. T. V. Dinakaran, nephew of Sasikala and friend

of former chief minister J. Jayalalitha. In February, a few days after his arrest, Dinakaran had complained of chest pain and was admitted to the General Hospital. It was diagnosed as high blood pressure and cardiac disorder which required immediate and intense treatment. Certified thus, Dinakaran stayed at the hospital from 20 February to 5 May. Later, a followup diagnosis was done at the Southern Railway Hospital, which pronounced him to be of normal health.

Doctors abetting artful dodgers (continued) ⁴

A year after the Indian Express exposed the doctor-criminal nexus in the government-run J. J. Group of Hospitals, the quasi-judicial Maharashtra Medical Council (MMC) has found, prima facie, evidence to initiate a probe against Lekha Pathak, Honorary Professor and Head of the hospital's cardiology department. MMC's executive committee resolved to issue a show-cause notice to Pathak on two counts. Firstly, whether the professional knowledge and expertise of the medical practitioner was used to keep the prisoners comfortable in the Intensive Care Unit and secondly, whether professional knowledge, clinical, skills were used to misguide the judiciary with a view to support the criminals.

When contacted, Pathak said she had not received any notice so far. In fact, she said, the government committee which probed into the allegations had cleared her.

Official records show that the actual enquiry was conducted by Urmila Sathe, Professor and Head of the Department of Anaesthesia, J. J. Group of Hospitals without examining the case papers mentioned in the (Express) report.

Supreme Court decision on practice of more than one form of medicine ⁵

Concerned about its negative impact on health infrastructure in rural Maharashtra, the state government is considering asking the Supreme Court to review a recent order preventing those who have studied one form of medicine from practicing another.

In order to provide adequate medical care to the rural population, the state government had issued a resolution a few years ago allowing ayurvedic doctors to practice allopathy.

Maharashtra Medical Council (MMC) in a Rs. 32,00,000 scam⁶

MMC has raked in over Rs. 32 lakh since

1992 by way of excess charges from fresh medical graduates seeking to be registered as doctors. Until May 1992, MMC charged Rs. 110 as first time registration fees from all young doctors who are required, under the Maharashtra Medical Council Act 1965 to enroll themselves with the MMC before they can practice medicine in any form.

The fee was suddenly hiked to Rs. 520 without obtaining the mandatory prior permission of the State Government.

Since approximately 2000 graduates apply for registration each year, over 8000 have paid Rs. 520 since May 1992 - bringing in about Rs. 32 lakh!

MMC registrar A. K. Karekar told this reporter that a proposal for increasing the fees had been sent to the State Health Ministry and a government regulation (GR) would be issued 'soon'. Highly placed officials in Mantralaya said on 17 December 1996 that no GR had ever been issued for raising MMC charges and that the increased charges were a clear violation of legal norms.

They also said that MMC was supposed to submit audited accounts each year to the medical education department of the state government. MMC has failed to do this even once in the past four years.

The attention of top officials of the medical education department was drawn to these malpractices by MMC on at least two occasions in the past but they did nothing even to investigate matters, leave alone take steps to correct wrongs.

References

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