

▼ REVIEW

INTEGRATION OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS CONCEPT, VISION, INSIGHT AND LEADERSHIP

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Summary

Healthcare Professional Development is facing challenges. It is necessary that the administrators should be deeply committed and their involvement should be with the understanding of the concept. The model that emerges should be based on a vision aiming at achieving academic excellence towards attaining universal healthcare. Therefore, there is a need of leadership by the experienced professionals pledging and obliged to develop future trained healthcare manpower. Consequently, one should not hesitate in suggesting to bring about drastic changes in the recruitment of students, revamping the curriculum, changing training methodologies and appropriate faculty development.

Introducing 'Integration' for "Achieving Academic Excellence":

There is a need to bring together educators in medical, dental, nursing, and allied health sciences to achieve academic excellence through faculty development. It is true and is also realistic to achieve. But merely training and awarding degrees are not enough. The product, healthcare personnel, that come out must be motivated to understand and practice realities that are engulfed in delivering modern healthcare. Community healthcare must be considered as fundamental and not merely serving individual patient. Leadership by an institution is required. To achieve this, one should work with definitive objectives. One can and must assume leadership in the profession. The definition of 'integration' has been clearly quoted by WHO that is:

"The management and delivery of health services, so that clients receive a continuum of preventive and

curative services, according to their needs over time and across different levels of the health system."

Integration at All Levels:

There is another important factor that must be considered. Integration of organizations must be at all levels; intradepartmental within an institution and inter-institutional of various professional groups- medical, dental, nursing and allied health sciences. Though we talk about working together there is always disagreements between the specialties. Estrangement at various levels and dissatisfaction between different sections of allied sciences exists. Resistance and lack of communication has led to present day scenario of living in isolation. These improper and inadequate inputs is disrupting the development of modern medical education that is to be practiced at community level. But tomorrow's physician, perhaps, is being sent in to the community with a narrow outlook. At present, healthcare services are suffering. Primary Healthcare is in disarray. The poor and pathetic picture of healthcare can be best seen and appreciated at the Primary Health and Community Health Centers.

Integration or Discrimination;

Instead of integration, it appears that many institutions including dental, nursing are meted with second rate treatment. The benefits of practice of Yoga and Music are not recognized across the board. However, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth University is an example where we are surging forward in spite of all odds and perfect harmony is being created towards integration of allied sciences. Bring in integration at all levels beginning within once own unit-environment of work. Only then an atmosphere will be created for various

specialties to interact for mutual understanding; thereby integrating from basic workers to highly place professionals, from social workers to nursing personnel will take place. Only then inter-disciplinary teaching and training leading to community based research. No doubt there is a need to bring together educators in medical, dental, nursing, and allied health sciences to achieve academic excellence through faculty development.

Leadership Required Not Training and Awarding degrees:

Merely training and awarding degrees are not enough. The trained must be able to restore the health of their clients from disease and help maintain normal physical and mental wellbeing. They must be motivated to modern realities of community healthcare requirements. Simply managing individual patient is not the aim. Institutions must assume leadership in the profession. Charaka, in his famous 'CharakSamhitha' described two types of diseases;

One 'Internal' that describes the 'loss of faith in divine' which leads to suffering in

'Spiritual, Mental and Physical diseases' and

the second: 'External' that 'varies with time of the day, seasons, diet and life styles'.

How true they are even today. Teaching and training methodologies that were in vogue in ancient India were not explored for our advantage. Even the history of medicine is not being taught. Simple healing methods practiced in the olden days are still good to treat simple ailments at home; use of garlic, turmeric, ginger etc., for example, that are being re-introduced globally. Many healthcare workers either are ignorant or shy to prescribe. One should re-examine them to see how useful they are in the context to achieve today's global healthcare system.

Maintain Ethical Standards:

In the past, Physicians were multi-skilled and the ethical standards practiced were of highest order. If we follow at least few of methods, we can turn out excellent primary care physicians. Some of our ancient sciences like Yoga and Music which are enriched with ethical values and practices, are being adopted for the management of diseases all over the globe. But in India it is yet to find a place in curriculum.

Yoga and Music are for promoting health of body and mind. It helps in physical and spiritual exercise providing appropriate nourishment to body and brain. Teachings of Greek physician, Hippocrates, shows how he was able to change the societies in their approach to many diseases. The Hippocratic oath demonstrates the essence of practices of the past that are so relevant even for today. Today many diseases like Diabetes, hypertension and many cancers could be prevented.

Empower Healthcare Manpower

Nursing profession that came in existence some 150yrs ago is assuming greater responsibility, all over the globe, in caring the patients. Dental Professionals are being approached by Head and Neck Surgeons to team up for treatment. Rehab professionals are taking over the patients soon after major surgeries and managing for quick postoperative recovery.

However new challenges as, a result of army conflicts and terrorism witnessing rapid spread of diseases and disabilities. Also as a result, hunger and food shortages causing unexpected health related problems creating new challenges for training healthcare professions. These are few examples about which the modern physicians must trained to deal with.

Population Health: Understand and Teach:

Unfortunately, healthcare professionals have failed to understand the importance of population health. Unless the faculty gets involved in the health management of the community and teach the very basic concept of maintaining health they will not be able to prepare the future physicians. Therefore, population sciences must be included in undergraduate curriculum to expose students to the community health problems. Prospective specialists, must be trained extensively at community level before certifying them as specialists.

Healthcare professionals must also be trained to help implement public health programs like 'Swatcha Bharat'. Healthcare administrators must make sure that their surrounding areas including restrooms and toilets are kept clean, setting example. A clean environment within the working surroundings will send a message to all to keep their eyes opened.

Teacher, Taught and Training:

Reforms are needed in the methodology by which we select medical students, recruit teachers and the way they

train the students. We must connect with the past, explore good practices that are being practiced in some countries and absorb the good. To bring about changes, however, there is a struggle and there will be resistance. But today's mandate is to produce the physicians of tomorrow. We must be prepared not to shy in pronouncing reprimands. Review the qualifications needed and training required for faculty. We must be prepared to go beyond the bedside teaching to family healthcare establishing the community based communications.

The revolutionary ideas presented by the Sir Bhore Committee, in India and the changes that were brought in USA following Flexner Report are some of the best examples one must follow. One should pursue for perfection for professional excellence. Only then there is future.

Revamping of Medical Education Required:

Emphasis in teaching on the proper utilization of the infrastructure that is already available and ensure proper and effective referral services. Therefore, there is a need for the young doctors to work for 6-12 months in rural areas independently after passing but before getting their certification to practice. Also, a minimum of two years during their post graduation studies before they qualify to be specialists. (European models).

There is an urgent need to overhaul healthcare services that we see and we manage. To bring a change, initiate modified teaching and training and make today's physicians tomorrow's futuristic physicians. Rural and urban slum population must be taken care. Therefore, revamp and revitalize curriculum to focus on issues that affect the health.

Governments, at the beginning of its fiscal year, always pronounce policies of 'ambitious plans for improving health and bettering diseases, exhibiting its commitment improving and upgrading healthcare services'. But it often fails to translate into reality to its full extent of commitment. It is to be stressed that medical professionals must take the advantage of the call and constantly remind the politicians and bureaucrats to live up to their commitments that will help promote research and rehabilitation.

To implement healthcare policies of a country, it is essential for the Govt. to have strategy to train

healthcare professionals from not only medical but also integrate dental, nursing, rehab, nutrition, paramedical. Involve social workers, counselors etc. in the system, at all levels.

Future healthcare professionals should also be trained to take part in promoting healthy life styles to prevent diabetes, hypertension, cancer etc. The healthcare professionals must play a leading role in the community teaching and explaining the advantages of healthy life styles for promoting quality health to have a 'Quality of life'.

KYC (Know Your Client) and KYP (Know Your Patient):

There is a case to emphasize on reducing the global burden of disease for which we must emphasize on preventive aspects. Hence, I argue and suggest that there is a need for us to implement a program like KYC (Know Your Client) as in, banking sector. Here in Healthcare sector it could be KYP (Know Your Patients) in public health sector.

Teacher, Taught and Training:

Therefore, there is a need for reforms in many areas beginning with the way in which we select the medical students. The methods we use to teach and the way in which they train future physicians. Sweeping changes incorporating some old traditional methods of teaching and training integrating various related departments is necessary. We must connect with the past, explore the present good practices and adapt them. There will be resistance, however, to bring about far-reaching changes. But these changes are for good and we must manage to overcome the odds in order to produce the physicians of tomorrow for the country.

The revolutionary ideas presented by the Sir Bhore Committee, in India and the changes that were brought in USA following Flexner Report are some of the best examples one must follow. One should pursue for perfection for professional excellence. Review the qualifications needed and training required for faculty. We must be prepared to go beyond the bedside teaching to community based teaching involving community. We must be prepared not to shy in pronouncing reprimands. Only then there is future.