

Avoidable problems

Joshi KD

Professor, Department of Surgery, Kathmandu Medical College, Sinamangal, Kathmandu

litigation. These days this is a word that is frequently bandied about in medical circles. Unfortunately, the problems appear to be increasing every year. Intentionally or not, misunderstandings do occur between doctors and patients. The agonized patient party takes recourse against the doctor or hospital by going to court or even getting violent. Abetting at such periods of tensions is done by spectators, sensational newspapers and legal advice etc. All this does not solve the problems; rather misunderstanding and distrust increase. Probably, the blame lies with both the parties. Opinions would vary. Certainly, we doctors have more conciliatory roles to play. Informed consent, repeated communication with the patient and his party is indispensable. The problems may have been avoided with continuous proper and timely dialogue.

No doubt, there was time when the medical profession aim was to produce scholar saints, wise scientists, knowledgeable, sensitive, humble, good and compassionate physicians. I believe we still try to train students to be that. However, once these

youngsters step out into the real world they receive sharp knocks to their ethos and values. Facing frustrating constraints of all kinds and the experiences in real life put their ideals into severe strain. Hopefully, in spite of the difficulties, they must not ignore the importance of being competent medical practitioners. They should continue to be in touch with latest trends, learn to have good and kind bedside manners, be knowledgeable teachers, honest with oneself and with the patient. Those days when a physician could be arrogant, unfeeling, 'god like' and out of touch with their subject are long over. One must realize that patients nowadays are less deferential, conscious of their rights and more knowledgeable. The physician must not take them for granted or it will be at their own peril. Modern age has shown an explosion of communication skills and so we physicians must also communicate with our patients and avoid unnecessary misunderstandings and hardships. In this, both Nepal Medical Council and Nepal Medical Association must have guidelines for such disputes and emergencies that are beginning to explode all around us.