

Editorial

The Lost “Art” of Medical Practice

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To older Medical Practitioners, it is well known that the practice of medicine is both an art and a science. The struggle facing younger Doctors in today's world is trying to find a good balance between the two. Their reliance on technology to aid their diagnosis and practice of their craft has resulted in them becoming extensions of the technology that was developed to serve and assist them with making a diagnosis. It has made them devoid of humanity and empathy, symbols of “medical arts”. Some practitioners have come to be almost like an extension of the very technology they use. Their interaction with patients at a level that appears to be lacking in “humanism”! Courses in medical school that deal with the art of doctor patient communication, seem to have been forgotten fairly quickly by these younger doctors as they hurry to quickly transmit the information obtained from their “Technology Masters”, often neglecting to do so in an empathetic manner.

To Physicians like myself who trained in the 1960s and now find myself as a patient of the newer breed of “Doctor”, I find myself comparing them to highly trained technicians or service personnel, much the same as any other whom I might call on to repair an appliance or fix my plumbing. They seem to use the same diagnostic tools and deliver the “diagnosis” in pretty much the same “matter of fact” manner. I cannot help but reflect back on how the practice of what was once an art, blended with science, has become no different than purchasing a service in a store.

While the current system in which young doctors practice is becoming more fast-paced and technology based, and in many cases similar to the video games they played as children, a way has to be found to help them understand that the practice of medicine is much more than a video game, played in the setting of virtual reality. Their patients are not appliances or animated figures on a video screen, but are humans who have feelings, and often seek empathy when they visit their doctor. It is clear that medical schools have to try to do a better job with identifying ways in which to preserve the “art of medicine”. This “art” is in danger of being crushed by ever increasing and total reliance on technology by young doctors, who themselves are at risk of becoming nothing more than “Automatons”, and no longer “Doctors”!