

Distressing Trend of Violence on Medical Professionals

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Hello Fellow Orthopods,

I am nearing the end of my term as President of our prestigious Association and I am grateful for the cooperation of the whole executive member's team and all members of the association.

The recent gruesome attack on a fellow orthopaedic surgeon working at Govt Medical College, Dhulia has grabbed the attention of all medical practitioners not only in Maharashtra, but the whole country. Similar incidents have happened sporadically in the past and continued after that, but Dr Roshan was a victim of an alarmingly brutal episode of hooliganism of the most heinous nature. Seeing the video recording was terrifying and the whole medical fraternity expressed solidarity and alarm by demonstrations and strikes albeit unsynchronised. We too, as MOA, express our anguish and condemn this violence.

Unfortunately, after a few days we will once again start working as usual and the memory of the event will fade, till a fresh attack occurs. Friends, the time has come where we all must wake up to reality. We are all potential victims of such attacks and mere legislation (which already exists since 2010) is ineffective in preventing such violence. We MUST all change the nature of our practice to keep up with changing times.

A few of the steps we can take are as follows:

- 1) **Increase in the security** in the hospital, especially in the Casualty Department, with guards armed at least with Batons.
- 2) **Gate control** of all hospitals and strict adherence to the rule of not allowing more than two relatives to enter with a patient even in emergency
- 3) **CCTV surveillance** with continuous monitoring by security personnel and a notice to that effect on the walls.
- 4) **Up gradation of infrastructure** so that all necessary facilities for emergency treatment are available in working condition at all times
- 5) **Adequate staff** (Nursing and paramedical) to assist the Doctor on duty for treating emergencies
- 6) Improvement of **Communication skills of all the staff members** of the hospital with particular stress on detecting and handling potentially dangerous situations
- 7) **Appointment of PROs** in casualty to pacify and inform relatives about progress of cases
- 8) Maintain **Proper Records**, consent forms and follow accepted protocols,
- 9) Maintain good relations with the nearest **Police station** and keep help line numbers prominently displayed in your hospital in case patients relatives are violent.
- 10)) Make a WhatsApp group of local doctors who will respond to a message of distress and come for help. When there is a death or patient is gasping call for help whenever you anticipate trouble.
- 11) Most important, treat all Doctors as your friends and colleagues, and not as competitors. Avoid loose comments and sledging.

These points need detailed discussion and more study, but besides orthopaedics, this one aspect of our profession deserves our full attention. Remember, patients no longer consider us as demigods. We are mere service providers who are paid for services. Media hype has further increased the divide between Doctors and patients and in a crisis the only people who come to our aid are other Doctors. Whatever respect patients show for us is a mere facade and when things go wrong, the same people treat us as demons. Sad but true.

However, at the risk of sounding like an old fogey, a word of advice. Once you have taken all necessary precautions for your safety, continue to treat patients with empathy and concern. We still continue to be healers and though the divide has increased, patients still need our best professional services and skill for their well being. A caring Doctor is what the patients need in their difficult times and we must continue to provide the same.

Wish You All a Long, Successful and Safe Career.

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