

Integrating Science and Art of Medicine

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The art of medicine and science of medicine are not antagonistic but supplementary to each other. There are both important differences and similarities between science and arts. Art rediscovers, generation after generation, what is necessary to humanness. Basic elements of art, according to Aristotle, are symmetry, proportion and an organic order of parts in united whole. True art is moral. It seeks to improve life and not to debase it. Even artistic modes need scientific evaluation. Art does not mean wandering in the wilderness. By enlarge medical professionals try to use and construct all these artistic needs in the human body and soul. It is naïve to say that art does badly what science does well, or the contrary. Illness, disease, and medical context provide the mixture of emotion, drama, irony, humour, blood and gore which is grist to the mill of the novel, play, film and a TV serial. Medicine and art have a common goal to complete what nature cannot bring to a finish, i.e., to reach the ideal, to heal creation. This is done by paying attention. Physician attends the patient, artist attends the nature. Art like medicine is not an arrival. It's a search. That is why medicine by itself is called an art. Being a doctor, considered as a species of logic and rationality, need not to be frightened by the art, as if it is some thing superfluous. Oscar Wilde said very rightly "Life imitates art far more than the art imitates life"

While practicing medicine there are many aspects which can not be fitted in a predictable scientific model, yet they need to be addressed. Here innovation and creativity can be given a space. But, even this must be dealt as rigorous and critical as any scientific approach. Imaginative capacity goes a long way with a doctor, while dealing patients, human agonies, traumas, difficult situations and reactions. A doctor, being so much close to the dreadful face of human life, has to use the imaginative capability to its extreme.

A structured scientific approach does not allow for individual differences. In the realm of evidence based medicine a generalized umbrella of treatment, where all aspects of disease are already well delineated, most of the times it hampers patient-doctor close interaction. High-tech gadgets, evidence based curricula and application of more rigorous management models leave little space for art of

medicine. The medical pendulum goes on swinging from the science to art. At a busy clinical floor it is like moving on a tight rope to keep balance between pressurizing clinical conundrums and a Dale Carnegie's, all the time goody-goody, demeanour. Studies reveal that, most of the times, patients' trust is usually grounded in physician's professional expertise. Even then it is required to put patient in knowledge rather than knowledge in patient. Treatment of disease may be essentially impersonal; the care of a patient must be completely personal. When science leads man towards arrogance, art reminds him of his limitations. When science narrows the area of man's concern, art reminds him of the richness and diversity of existence. Crudeness of science can be cleansed by softness of art.

American reformer, Will Durant, tried to resolve this conflict, by saying that "Art without science is poverty, and science without art is barbarism. Let every science strive to fulfil itself in beauty or wisdom, and let us rejoice when a science becomes an art." A petition/prayer of Sir Robert Hutchison (all time acclaimed for his pioneering book on clinical methods), "Good Lord Deliver us (Protect us; Save us) From inability to let well alone, from too much zeal for the new and contempt for what is old, from putting knowledge before wisdom, science before art and cleverness before common sense, from treating patients as cases and from making the cure of the disease more grievous than the endurance of the same, good Lord deliver us." Let's wait, some time, some where, skin and the soul, head and the heart, physics and metaphysics, smiles and sorrows and tech and touch will have a lovely hug. That will be the day, that will be the day.

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