

Foundation of Medical Education with Gandhian Ideology; Need of the Hour

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Abstract

A strong foundation of health providers is essential for becoming competent in quality health services with compassion. Medical students' learning needs to be for quality life with a healthy body-mind and wellness of service users, without or with disorders that cannot be cured. For this, what could be better than learning with Gandhian ideology? Medical education and accreditation of organizations require medical ethics and humanities in education to develop professionalism in medical learners, yet there has never been a comprehensive critical appraisal of medical education in ethics and humanities, which Gandhian ways inculcate. In addition to biological knowledge, physicians must have an understanding of behavioral and social aspects of health and disease.

Introduction

A strong foundation for learning by health providers is essential for becoming competent in quality health services with compassion. Medical student's learning needs to be for quality life with a healthy body and healthy mind and wellness of service users, without or with disorders that cannot be completely cured. For this, what could be better than learning with Gandhian ideology? Gandhi had written about his experiments in his own publication, "Indian Opinion," under the title "Guide to Health" and in some articles on Nature cure with the use of five elements, air, earth, water, light, the emptiness of the horizon surrounding the earth and their effects on body and mind.^[1] When Gandhi returned to India from South Africa, those compiled articles were **published** while he was confined in Aga Khan Palace in 1942.^[2] The book is known as "Key to Health". It is translated into different Indian and European languages. The book became popular because Gandhi wrote with a novel idea, somewhat different from the ways adopted by medical practitioners. Gandhi believed a lot in nature's cure and in his famous eleven vows 'Non-violence, Truth, Control over Tongue-Palate, Celibacy, Physical work, Non-stealing, Non-possession, Fearlessness, No caste barrier, Equality in religion and Swadeshi or self-reliance. The same should become a guiding light to all those dealing with health care.^[3] Simple living and high thinking **were** his motto in life. Gandhian way of life should add value to the learning of medicine. Gandhi had said of all parties needed for healing, 'Empathy' was the most essential to becoming a healer in a true sense, as treating is one thing **and** healing another. The provider should always be a healer. Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences Sewagram, the first rural medical institute of India started in the Gandhi centenary year 1969, strives to work on Gandhian ways, inculcation of value-based medical education for the best of health care. In the same spirit, at Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (MGIMS), Sewagram, it was decided that the students learn the Gandhian ways of life with a foundation program at the very beginning of their medical education. There could not have been a better place than

Gandhi's Aashram, in Sewagram of Wardha district of Maharashtra, where Gandhi lived and where India's first rural medical institute was established (Fig 1).

Fig 1



It started decades back with the very first batch, 'Foundation Program,' in Sewagram Aashram, which is one of its kind in the world. Attempts are made to have the mindset of learning for the best health services. Inculcation of Gandhian values in health sciences education aims at the holistic development of budding healthcare professionals, doing away with the fragmented approach to teaching-learning.^[4] As the new batch of students comes to Sewagram, they enter the Aashram with a vision of imbibing ideals. They live in Gandhi's **Ashram** in dormitories (Fig 2).

Fig 2



They clean their own places, including toilets, wash their own clothes, and cook their own food, with some support in cooking from the institute's kitchen, which is one km away from Gandhi Aashram. They clean their utensils, too. Students and their mentors eat together, feeling the togetherness of students who come from all over the country, some from nearby countries too, from different economic strata, speak different languages, and are used to different lifestyles and different food habits. They sleep there, play there, and learn there from morning to evening. Throughout the day, there are discussions on simple ways of life. The day starts early in the morning and ends not too late in the **evening!** The institute's

mission and details of work are shared by the Dean. They try to understand various aspects of the Gandhian way of life. Experts from all over the country are invited to speak in the context of the theme of the foundation for medical **education**, keeping Gandhian ideology. Mahatma Gandhi established a nature cure center in a small village near Pune, Urlikanchan, in Maharashtra Province of India, which was useful for poor and rich alike, essentially propagating the concept of village sanitation and healthy living in villages. He strongly believed in cleanliness and non-discrimination in health services in society. The same is shared by experts through talks and discussions with young minds. Since there have been changes in the medical council's duration of the MBBS course, Basic sciences get two terms instead of three terms, so the beginning of the learning of basic sciences –Anatomy, Physiology, and Biochemistry are made during the foundation program by faculty visiting Gandhi Ashram. Also, students have sessions on stress management, learn ways of coping with the stress of medical education, and learn communication skills. They are also enlightened about socio-economic determinants of health and low-cost health care. Students are encouraged to play and enjoy extracurricular activities, be it sports, dancing, singing, drama, and so on. Before they leave Gandhi Aashram, there is a showcase of their talents not only for the whole batch of students but also for their mentors, other students, **and** faculty also join (Fig 3).

Fig 3



Actually, before the national eligibility entrance test was started for medical admission in India, there used to be a paper on Gandhian Thoughts with the value of paper equal to science subjects at MGIMS Sewagram. As the weightage of the paper was equal to the science subjects, students, as well as families, used to read about Gandhi. So, if one calculates an

average of five members in each family, with well around 12,000 applicants reaching the institute every year, nearly 60,000 to 1lac people were reading about Gandhi every year for medical education in a medical college, and there is always a ripple effect. Unfortunately, this is no longer there. Something good is **gone** because of the system change of medical admission. During their tenure of 2 weeks in Gandhi Aashram, they also made fabric the way Gandhi used to do (Fig 4).

Fig 4



The student who does the maximum is given an award. Out of the thread, napkins are made and used by students and faculty and gifts for guests. Similarly, there is the best all-rounder student award too. In addition to their own activities, they also join in morning and evening all religious prayers held in the Aashram always (Fig 5)

Fig 5



The 21st century has drifted away from Gandhian values, with lust for power, misuse of science and technology, and unfair competition, leading to extravagant expenditures on health and wellness. Only a healthy mind with a healthy body can try the same for others. The program at Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Sewagram, is an attempt in this direction. Health sciences institutions need to imbibe Gandhi's philosophy in the true

sense to improve global health. A recently released survey of hospital leaders from the American Hospital Association (AHA) highlighted the need to **educate physicians and trainees** in the United States of America regarding quality improvement. The AHA report identified deficiencies in newly trained physicians in systems-based practice, communication skills, and the ability to work within teams.^[5] At the beginning of the 20th century, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, based in Stanford, California, USA, spearheaded a major reform movement in medical education. A Call to Transform Medical Education in creatively envisioning and thoughtfully inventing medical education anew.^[6] Medical education accreditation organizations require medical ethics and humanities education to develop professionalism in medical learners, yet there has never been a comprehensive critical appraisal of medical education in ethics and humanities. The PRIME expert panel in the USA concurred that medical ethics and humanities education are essential for professional development in medicine.^[7] In addition to biological knowledge, physicians must have an understanding of the behavioral and social aspects of health and disease. Medical education must, therefore, include the behavioral, social, probabilistic, and information sciences, as well as ethics.^[8]

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