Are Doctors Angels Of Death Or Mercy?

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Medical Trust and the Dark History of Criminal Physicians

“I was born with the devil in me”. This is a statement that was issued by the physician turned serial killer, Dr. Henry Howard Holmes. Doctors are considered angels and life saviours, and they are tasked with making life-saving decisions. The doctor-patient relationship lies at the heart of health care, and patient trust is a fundamental aspect of that relationship. As Carl Jung said, “Medicines cure disease, but only doctors can cure patients” (Jung). The medical profession is very noble. Doctors have contributed selflessly to the community from the dawn of mankind. However, at the same time, history has a few cases where doctors have been the cause of death for countless victims. Patients trust their physicians blindly, disremembering the fact that they have access to several deadly instruments, envenomed medications, and complete knowledge of the delicacies of the human body. Nevertheless, it should be highlighted, and doctors should realize the sacredness of the Hippocratic Oath they take and the importance of the human lives they deal with. Doctors might be heroes to some, but they surely have carved their daunting image as murderers within the past few decades, like what Gottfried Leibniz said, “A great doctor kills more people than a great general” (Leibniz).

According to the extensive medical-scientific knowledge, the profession of doctor has always been necessary and respected. Among the list of heroes of medicines who have made an enormous contribution to the field of health is Edward Jenner, who conceived the first-ever vaccine to treat an infection in humans and has been a torch-bearer for modern medicine (Taylor, Robert B). Also, Sir Alexander Fleming, who is known by the entire medical-scientific community for the crucial discovery of penicillin, the first antibiotic used by humans consciously, was a starting point for the research of other antibiotic substances, saving countless lives since then. Those heroic role models have inspired many students to choose medicine as their career path. It was found in one of the surveys in a medical college in London that about 48% of the population wants to become a surgeon in the future (Fysh et al.). The high percentage of statistics clearly shows how passionate students are regarding this career and how sacred this profession is.

All these praises are mainly because doctors “save human lives”. However, as a matter of fact, every coin has two sides. Numerous events have been documented to date that have not only shown the devilish nature of a few doctors but also led us to question our blind trust in them. Historically, a couple of physicians and many other people related to this noble profession have committed heinous

crimes of murdering their patients, and many of them were proud of their acts. The first doctor serial killer in America, Herman Midgett, who was better known as Dr. Holmes, built an entire cover building, which he used to lure his victims and kill them either by suffocation or strangling ("The Dark Side of Medicine"). Later on, he used to ignite their bodies in a kiln or sell them as cadavers to medical schools. In 2019, Dr. William Husel was indicted and charged with 25 counts of murder for allegedly intentionally ordering fatal drug overdoses in the deaths of hospitalized patients (Fierce Healthcare). Husel deliberately ordered overdoses of fentanyl that he gave to his patients at Mount Carmel and St. Ann's hospitals in Columbus to help end their lives. Another case happened in Virginia, Dr. Joel Smithers, who was sentenced to 40 years for illegally prescribing opioids, including one prescription that caused a woman's death (Fierce Healthcare). During his trial, the authority presented evidence showing that he prescribed controlled substances to every patient in his practice, distributing over 500,000 doses to patients from different states (Fierce Healthcare).

Pharmaceutical Misconduct, Regulatory Failure, and Public Harm

Moreover, the pharmaceutical companies and the FDA are not far behind in misleading and sabotaging the public trust. Recently, a big pharmaceutical company hid a harmful side effect of a new medicine just to get approval from the FDA (Food and Drug Administration). The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is supposed to protect Americans from harmful drugs. However, in reality, FDA approval does not guarantee safety. Critics say big pharmaceutical companies fund FDA reviews of new drugs, creating a conflict of interest. The Institute of Medicine reports that $1.8 million in funds are needed for pharmaceutical regulation in the U.S. for major deficiencies in the FDA system to ensure the safety of drugs on the American market (Wikipedia). All these incidents have led people to one question. In modern times, how far have people come up as human beings in the context of protecting each other and trusting each other? Doctors have always been a sign of a saviour, but in the modern day and age, where nothing can be hidden from the common people, the untold truth of doctors has come ashore.

Furthermore, there have been a number of events jotted down in historical documents that have shown the devilish side of the noble profession of doctors. The number of doctors charged with manslaughter has increased since 1990. Around 85 doctors were convicted (Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine). In addition to mass murders, drug poisoning, and other malpractices, doctors have been found to kill people in the name of medical obligations and science. The infamous atrocious events of "the Nazi Experiments" have exemplified how medicine can be used in a negative manner. Marks has demonstrated in his book "Doctors from hell: The horrific account of Nazi experiments on humans" how doctors were merciless enough to perform such gruesome experiments on innocent people. People were starved to death, not allowed to sleep for months, left breathless in compressed chambers, and so much more. "The major goal of the Cold War mind control programs was to create dissociative symptoms and disorders, including full multiple personality disorder" (Bluebird). Doctors,

Scientific, and Professional Advisory Board were using electroconvulsive treatment, brain electrode implants, and hypnosis to create amnesia, depersonalization, changes in identity, and altered states of consciousness (Goodreads). In addition to that, the same remorseless experiments took place during wartime in China. “Japanese doctors performed iron-hearted trials on healthy men and women by injecting them with diseases and watching the response to create weapons for biological warfare” (Nie).

The main issue that is under discussion is the unlimited access of all kinds of notorious and lethal instruments to doctors, physicians, surgeons, and healthcare workers. As they are humans, they can snap under any circumstances. All these factual reasons raise an alarming situation, not only for setting regulations that govern doctors and other healthcare workers but also act as a warning for patients to be vigilant whenever deciding to consult a doctor. At the same time, there should be a strict policy for the use of lethal and high-dose medications before doctors get their hands on them. Doctors are a source of light for people suffering from serious ailments, and there is no question about the healing power that doctors possess. The Hippocratic Oath that doctors take on the day they start their medical practice promises that oath is “first, do no harm”, which binds them to deliver morally and ethically evaluated care to their patients. Unfortunately, there are a few doctors who forget about this oath and give in to their devilish nature. As James Lendall Basford said, “We are in the age of M.D., medical darkness, which seeks legislative protection from the light” (Basford). Since doctors have deep knowledge about different drugs and all sorts of sharp instruments, a mentally challenged physician can harm his patients rather than heal them.

Doctors, Healing, and the Continuing Need for Ethical Medicine

Moreover, there is no doubt that we all require doctors at some point in our lives. We all suffer from diseases and illnesses that require medical help. Doctors serve the required purpose as Voltaire states, “Doctors are men who prescribe medicines of which they know little, to cure the disease of which they know less, in human beings of whom they know nothing” (Voltaire). The compassion they show towards their patients is unmatchable. According to a survey, a patient recorded the following comments post-surgery: I” would just like to add that I am pleased with the service provided and also that no matter what doctor I see, I am treated well and leave the surgery feeling that I have been listened to and looked after.” (Khajavi, n.d.). Empathy and humility are what the medical profession is made of, yet there are a few doctors in between, which soils the reputation of the profession.

Adding to that, the doctor-patient relationship is focused on trust. If doctors and professionals related to the medical field start becoming involved in heinous crimes, then how would common people feel comfortable in trusting their lives with them? It is a doctor’s duty to abide by the Hippocratic Oath he takes before starting his career, and for the sake of humanity, he should respect the value of human life. Although there are countless medical heroes who have given their lives and taken major steps

during different pandemics and natural calamities just for their patient's benefit or interest, there are doctors who have barbarically taken advantage of their patients' beliefs in them. In this modern era where information is just a click away from us, people have started to rely on online medical websites for their diagnoses and treatments such as "Teladoc". "It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver" (Mahatma Gandhi). That means better health is central to human happiness and well-being; it is more expensive than gold. It also makes an important contribution to economic progress, as healthy populations live longer, are more productive, and save more. Therefore, doctors need to regain their trust and belief in their patients and rebuild the healthy doctor-patient relationship that always has been there.

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