

EDITORIAL

The profile of the good doctor in Greece; a multifaceted opinion

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All doctors wish to be considered good doctors. They studied medicine with the dream to take their position in the magic world of medicine. Few are those who, even in the early stages of education, think that medicine is a simple job and don't have high expectations about any special progress in their professional career. Historically, the medical profession has been inseparable from ethics and as a matter of fact the services provided by doctors to patients are invaluable and cannot be measured by money. The same equals also in the nursing professions and other specialties involved in healthcare, but the protagonistic role is kept for medical doctors, whose decisions are crucially important for human lives.

There are many medical doctors who are totally devoted to the needs of their patients, and this is frequently met among young doctors and students. Throughout years, this enthusiasm and devotion, is giving place to disappointment, tiredness and hopelessness. Although this "category" of doctors should have been the classical profile of the good doctor, the truth varies from different perspectives.

Modern lifestyle makers present the image of the good medical doctor as one that stands very far from the majority of medical doctors. This person is very well-dressed, owns an expensive car and obviously earns high income consistently; has definitely studied abroad for some years, and is known for treating important and wealthy patients; has been invited to make appearances in TV and given successful interviews in newspapers. This image is apparently not what good doctor means according to medical ethics, and is definitely not the protagonistic image among good doctors in Greece.

Unfortunately, many medical doctors in Greece are poor and have great difficulty to support their families with the income they earn from the medical profession. They have to work second job many times (different jobs from the medical profession sometimes). They cannot afford fees for seminars and continuing medical education activities not only abroad but also in their own city of residence. Pharmaceutical companies frequently approach them with arrogance, because they do not respect them. Many times doctors have fights with their colleagues due to competition for attracting the interest of the pharmaceutical representatives (and thus earn some money to improve their lives, or in the better situation the participation ticket to an educational course).

Especially for surgical specialties, where laparoscopic surgery has developed numerous new techniques and skills needed for updated surgical professionals, the income is very important. In Greece, where nepotism is stronger than ever, teaching Hospitals give real education to a small number of specializing doctors only, and this in the long term makes *good doctors* and *not good doctors*. The governments cannot control corporate elites, which are organized like *the Mafia*, and are very powerful and distributed throughout the country. Thus, if one doctor wishes to receive advanced medical education, he should definitely leave Greece for some years; otherwise he should always be limited to an assisting role, especially if he is a surgeon.

The good doctor of course, has also theoretically the magic power to approach the patient and his sufferings, and to cure him with real interest, morality and respect to the human health. However, the available time for consultations is so limited in the majority of cases that the quality of the services offered to patients can fall dramatically, in public Hospitals. Also, if the doctor has financial problems and works second jobs, may not be so generous in feelings, as expected. As a matter of fact, doctors who are tender and compassionate fail in the private sector, as far as earnings are concerned.

The conflict between society and doctors is continuing in Greece and society wins only in the payments' field. In the rest but more important, as the quality of health services is, for example, or the promotion of really good doctors, the Greek society is a victim of its self-amputation behaviors. Because, if the doctor cannot afford his living he won't certainly offer the health services that we all deserve. For example, Greece has beautiful islands which are full of tourists during all summer. Unfortunately, the medical services offered are not at all covering the needs. Young and inexperienced doctors, absolutely scared in emergency situations, are the ones who represent the National System of Health and the private sector as well, in many touristic places. Behind them, the responsible is the failed governmental planning and the greediness of the health industry businessmen. The victims are all the members of the society plus the tourist population.

The conditions of work overload in Greek hospitals, the intensive and unstoppable stress, especially for young and inexperienced doctors, is the ideal environment for the