

EDITORIAL

Nepotism in medicine and the concept of franchising

Scenes from the Greek Scenario

Irene Christodoulou

Editor in Chief

Nepotism means favoritism shown or patronage granted to relatives, as in business. The word derives from Latin *nepos* ('nephew'). If Medicine is considered a business trust, then nepotism is a not only a good example for nepotism in the workplace but also could serve as a link between nepotism and franchising. Nepotism has been tried to be represented as a characteristic of poor countries where corruption is easy to develop because of the socioeconomic inequalities and the low educational level. A good educational background and the high socioeconomic status would be useful tools for people who were adversely affected, in order to seek justice. However, nepotism is strong in rich countries, too, and we see that the stronger examples come the era of politics. The son or the wife of a prime minister is thought naturally to be a suitable person to become the new prime minister: very common in many countries.

The family-business can be expanded via a patronage relationship through a marriage with one of the family members, for example a marriage with the son or daughter of a big doctor, but also can be related on non-family bonds in the level of patronage only (associates). Favoritism based on kinship usually occurs in the appointment to a job or in making employment decisions. However in Medicine, favoring relatives may mean a lot of things. We all understand the origin of a published paper with an author team like: "A.Papadopoulos, B. Papadopoulos, C. Papadopoulos". It is even more funny if A. Papadopoulos is a Professor in a Medical School, B.Papadopoulos is an elementary school teacher (but soon becomes a Lecturer in the same Medical School through various special regulations) and C.Papadopoulos is a psychologist or a veterinarian or a midwifery student who takes his /her place in the Faculty of the same Medical School without delay. This model of patronage in academic career is very custom and well-known. To favor a person, with little to no regard for anything but kinship.

What changes through the years in this matter, is the various tricks used by the influential people in order to succeed in their goals. An example is hiring or promoting relatives solely because they are family members, with no consideration of the qualifications or merit of other job candidates or employees. This changes with the years, and becomes more perfectly organized than ever, because the other candidates should not have the space to act against their decisions. A very recent trick is to accuse the other candidate of being insane, and this is recently a common trick in the illegal appointments that massively take place in the National System of Health in Greece. If

you persuade others that the more qualified candidate is impaired because he is mentally ill, then your child will be the good choice, also having the guarantee of an important person. It must be emphasized that the recommendation letters, that are so often used by all countries, with UK been one of the leaders in this kind of candidates evaluation, are a perfect tool for nepotistic actions. It is clear that nepotism is very strong in this selection criterion. Because the son or the daughter of a poor and socially weak family could not have the access to a recommendation letter of an influential person as the kin of a professor.

The legislation developed to many countries for the elimination of nepotistic actions and corruption, is available online in law or business related web sites. However, nepotism is always present, and undefeated through history, and does not seem to lose power because of modern social policies. The fact that there is no universal "nepotism law" that prohibits it in all countries and professions, makes the situation intolerable. Several state legislatures and city councils have passed nepotism laws (or anti-nepotism laws, as they're sometimes called), but typically only in regard to public sector employment. However, if the consequences of nepotism were not illegal, then so many rules would never have been established for the protection of adversely-affected employees, mainly in developed countries. In contrast to nepotistic actions, several legislation chapters have been developed, but this happens mainly in the more developed countries. In the same way, many gaps are left in legislation of smaller /not such developed countries for favor of the nepotistic cliques and their network. Some lawmakers want to extend the definition of nepotism to include people other than spouses and family members. Legislation would include fiancées or people sharing the same residence. Before anti-nepotism laws began evolving in the 1970s and 1980s, officials used to hire their wives and put them on their office payrolls. Today, they simply have their friends hire their wives and return the favor otherwise.

Illegal employment discrimination in Medicine starts from the point of Medical Education. A student of Medicine knows well how excellency is related to kinship in University exams. Later on, it is very usual that the son or daughter of the Professor will certainly have the chance to examine a patient with detailed teaching and support in the clinical practice solely, while others will always be staying behind. What is more important for many "instructors" in Medical Schools, is preparing younger family members – their family and the rest of Faculty family