

Editorial**Dr. R Ghubash's Defamation of Bahraini Doctors - Research and Ethics**

Jaffar M Al Bareeq, DLO, RCP, RCS(London)*

In an article published in Alwaqt Daily Newspaper on Sunday 2nd August 2009, Dr Ghubash said, "It is the first time in my life to see doctors negotiating their salaries and professional code, I did not see a group of them struggling to do research or fight for a research day". She added that there is unethical practice by medical practitioners in Bahrain.

"Luck never made a man wise"***Seneca 4BCE***

First and foremost, Bahrain has a democratic system which guarantees the freedom of speech. Dr Ghubash has the right to express her opinion but generalization against a class of professionals is not acceptable unless it is backed by research evidence. She made an opinion based on her impression about few instances with Bahraini medical doctors, but the majority she does not know. Every medical doctor and scientist needs to remember the scientific fact of "induction" that a generalization has to be abandoned as soon as you come across one exception, and there are many exceptions to her statement.

Saying that it is her first time to see doctors negotiating their salaries and professional code indicates that she had little experience and poor reading faculty. There are many instances where doctors negotiated their livelihood and even went on strike; Bahraini doctors never went on strike demanding an increment in their salaries. I will cite only few strikes, which happened in other medical communities, but history is full of these if she wants to read.

"The staffing problems of the NHS continue to make headlines. Junior doctors are threatening to strike, consultants are voicing their frustration, and nurses are voting with their feet"¹.

"More than 22,000 doctors in most of Germany's 36 university and state hospitals have decided to strike indefinitely from 16 March 2006. The doctors are demanding a 30% pay rise and better working conditions, with regular hours and paid overtime"².

"Between March and June of 1983, for 118 days, Israel experienced one of the most prolonged doctors' strikes ever recorded"³.

* Chief Editor

Bahrain Medical Bulletin-established 1979

Kingdom of Bahrain

Email: jmab@batelco.com.bh

“Fourteen thousand panel doctors serving 15,000,000 people under the British national health insurance scheme voted to strike January 1st if a cut in their stipend proposed by the Government is ordered. National Insurance Act was adopted when David Lloyd George was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1911”⁴.

In the same article, she claimed that the medical community in UK and USA are very ethical. It seems that she had no experience of unethical instances in England, USA and Europe, perhaps due to short stay and lack of interest.

If she wants to know the ethical behavior of any medical community, she should work with them for at least 20 years. Besides that, she should have the interest in medical ethics, not to use it as hanger whenever she needs to.

I would advise her to apply for the post of a president of a university in UK or USA, if she qualifies, she should not judge from her short experience in UK while she was a postgraduate student. Better, she should read the General Medical Council Proceeding (UK) about unethical behavior. There are many unethical behaviors, similar to any medical community. Even, there are criminal behaviors, read Shipman in perspective, published in 2000. I quote “There are enough recorded instances of multiple murders by doctors (real or bogus) to make at least a prima facie case that the profession attracts some people with a pathological interest in the power of life and death”⁵.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, physician and the author of Sherlock Holmes, said, “Subtle enough and horrible enough. When a doctor does go wrong he is the first of the criminals. He has the nerve and he has the knowledge. Palmer and Pritchard were among the heads of their profession”⁶.

“Dr Edward William Pritchard (6 December 1825 – 28 June 1865) was a Scottish doctor who was convicted of poisoning two family members. He was also suspected of the murder of a third person, though he was never tried for it. He was the last person to be publicly executed in Glasgow”⁷.

“Dr. William Palmer was a serial killer. He was, born in Rugeley on 6th August 1824, and he was convicted of murder in one of the most notorious cases of the 19th century”⁸.

“Let us not forget Dr. Radovan Karadzic (psychiatrist), he is 63-year-old war crimes suspect who faces genocide charges for his role in the massacre of more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys at Srebrenica in Europe’s worst atrocity since the Second World War, and for organizing the siege of Sarajevo which claimed 12,000 lives”.

Recently, on November 5, 2009, US Army psychiatrist Major Dr. Nidal Malik Hasan, opened fire in the Soldier Readiness Center, killing 13 people and wounding 30 others.

Few cases from the records of GMC to remind Dr Ghubash that there is no medical community that is immune against unethical behavior:

1. A consultant forged the signatures of two colleagues and falsely claimed authorship of research in which he had played no part was suspended for three months by the General Medical Council in England.
2. A consultant surgeon in England was found guilty of serious professional misconduct. He was suspended by the General Medical Council for publishing an article in "GUT" in December 1990 that contained information which "was deliberately falsified".
3. A consultant obstetrician has been suspended from duty at St George's Hospital in south London after an inquiry into the scientific validity of two research papers.
4. A psychiatrist and well-known broadcaster at BBC radio 4 has been found guilty of plagiarizing material for his book "All in the Mind" and publishing four plagiarized articles in the BMJ.

The followings are other reminders:

1. Nuremberg Doctors Trial⁹
2. Thalidomide Tragedy¹⁰
3. The Tuskegee Study¹¹
4. Intentional Exposure to Nuclear Radiation
5. The Japanese "Unit 731"
6. The Pseudomonas Vaccine Study Published in the Lancet
7. Folic Study Published in BMJ
8. Aboriginal Kids Used as Test Subjects for Leprosy

All the Above Unethical Behavior Was Not Committed by Any Bahraini.

Yes in UK and USA, the community and medical societies punish unethical behavior according to their laws, which is the main difference; in most Arab countries few of those who breach the ethical conduct are punished, the majority are ignored or promoted. I agree with her that Bahrain Medical Society should raise the banner for ethical conduct rather than seeking promotions in the ministry of health.

I agree that some Bahrainis do not conduct themselves ethically, similar to any medical community, but to generalize is dangerous, Bahraini doctors are similar to others, among them who conduct themselves ethically and others who do not.

Before making those appalling statements, has she applied the vigorous scientific research method:

- a. Bahraini doctors are unethical.
- b. Bahraini doctors only care about salary increment not research.
- c. I did not see a group of them struggling to do research or fight for a research day.

Had any one among Non-Bahrainis requested a research day? And how many? And did she grant their wishes? Before we discuss any further, did she make such facility "research day" available during her tenure of 8 years as president. How can she expect anybody to apply for something if the facility is not available? During her tenure as president of AGU, no record of non-Bahraini asking for a research day and no record of such day been

approved or proposed by the president. Imaginations sometimes run wild and some people confuse their imaginations with the reality.

Did she do any primary research or systematic review to reach these conclusions? Before making these appalling statements, has she applied critical thinking? Has she made her premise and tested it? What was the aim of those statements? Has she had enough information? Has she thought about the implications and consequences of her statements? Has she applied the method of deductive or induction before she reached those conclusions? Has she compared and contrasted the Bahraini doctors with others or she had no experience? Has she thought of an alternative conclusion?

From the previous statements, she had put herself as a judge and jury without research evidence. Does she think this should be the behavior of a researcher as she assumed herself to be one? What was the motive for making these statements? I did not find one respectable motive. Hatred to Bahraini, I am assuming, her animosity was evident on many occasions, where she appoints Non-Bahrainis whenever it is possible, even though Bahrainis are available and qualified for the position.

Does she not feel ashamed that she is pouring her anger on the weak and underprivileged? She knows fairly well that Bahraini doctors are hard working and underpaid compared to their counterparts in Gulf Cooperation Council. The hero does not pick a fight with the weak, he challenges his own size.

Bahrain Medical Bulletin was established 1979 and ninety percent of the research published in that journal is Bahraini produced research. All that research is done voluntarily without any funding support, which proves that Bahrainis and Bahraini based physicians are eager to do research even without funding. This phenomenon is rare in USA and UK. We should have little praise for Bahraini physicians rather than putting them down.

Table 1 shows a number of research reviews published in the most reputable journals and uploaded on Cochrane library. If the table proves anything, it is the active search of Bahrain based physician for the new frontier in medicine. I hope Dr Ghubash look carefully at the numbers and become convinced that Bahrainis and Bahrain based physician are active in research without reward or even a word of compliment.

Table 1: Cochrane Review in the Arab countries and Iran*

Bahrain Total Cochrane	13 Full Reviews
Egypt	7 Full Reviews
Saudi Arabia	7 Full Reviews
UAE	2 Full Reviews
Oman	Zero
Qatar	Zero
Kuwait	Zero
Jordan	Zero
Lebanon	Zero
Syria	3 Full Reviews
Yemen	Zero
Iran	6 Full Reviews

*Supplied by Dr Zbys Fedorowicz, Director of Cochrane branch in Bahrain

Table 2 shows the subject distribution and frequency of articles published in BMB and JBMS since their beginnings to date.

I hope Dr Ghubash has the time to look at the table and realize the diversity of research and publication produced in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Table 2: Number of Articles in BMB and JBMS by Board Subject*

Class	NLM Subject	1976 to date	No.
BF	Psychology		4
WY	Nursing		6
WN	Radiology, Diagnostic Imaging		11
WT	Geriatrics, Chronic Disease		14
QY	Clinical Pathology		15
WU	Dentistry, Oral Surgery		16
QT	Physiology		18
QW	Microbiology-Immunology		19
QS	Human Anatomy		21
QU	Biochemistry		22
QV	Pharmacology		23
WX	Hospital & Other Health Facilities		37
WL	Nervous System		38
WB	Practice of Medicine		39
WR	Dermatology		40
QZ	Pathology		41
WZ	History of Medicine		43
WD	Disorders of Systemic, Metabolic, or Environmental Origin etc.		45
WO	Surgery		47
WM	Psychiatry		53
WA	Public Health		59
WW	Ophthalmology		61
WS	Pediatrics		62
WF	Respiratory System		64
WV	Otolaryngology		78
WP	Gynecology		82
WG	Cardiovascular System		91
WQ	Obstetrics		93
WJ	Urogenital System		106
WC	Communicable Diseases		107
WH	Hemic & lymphatic System		110
WK	Endocrine System		114
WE	Musculoskeletal System		138
WI	Digestive System		152
W	Medical Profession		182

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Finally, Dr Ghubash is a respected member of our profession and had many great accomplishments; we hope she has a balanced view of her other colleagues from Bahrain or any other country.

“Our journey in medicine made us move from superstition to reason, childhood to adulthood, fantasy to reality and intoxication to sobriety”.

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For comment send to jmab@batelco.com.bh