

Editorial**Bahrain Medical Society - Morality Needs to be Restored**

Jaffar M Al-Bareeq, DLO, RCP, RCS*

Moral integrity and ethical practice is what is needed in this profession. Any president of Bahrain Medical Society (BMS) should not compromise the highest moral integrity with material gains and ambition of position. Mind you, greed is on the increase everywhere, doctors are refraining from treating their colleagues or over charging them – what happen to the general population is largely unknown? Absence of role model and lack of respect of senior colleague are another signs of debilitated morality. Decline of referral cases among colleagues is another sign of greed and unacceptable medical practice. The president of BMS should distance himself from those who abused the power in the medical society and used it as a stepping stone to attain a position in the Ministry of Health and Shura Council. Many of them have been plagued by greed for power and material gain – they forgot their divine task in life is to look after the health of their people. BMS should never forget its role to prepare leaders for the future. I hope the days of “little dictators” in Bahrain Medical society are gone forever - my hope may be unfounded!

What is needed from the new president is transparency and democratization of the society, where any decision by the executive committee is made available to all members. Hitherto, the environment was secretive, non-declarative and deceptive in some instances. The committees are run by group of selected members based on their friendship and loyalty to those in the executive committee - this is an irony, when some demand democracy but do not practice where they should. You have “to practice what you preach”.

The new president, in his election program promised to fulfill many objectives, which range from improving the medical service, defending the right of doctors and improving the function of BMS - so far we have seen very little.

A great deal needs to be accomplished by the society:

1. Medical Ethics based on which to practice Medicine needs to be adopted soon; we might be one of few societies that practice medicine without a code of ethics. Unfortunately, twenty-two years have elapsed since I proposed adopting the Medical Ethics, which I have written in 1980-1981, when I was the President of the Society. Three

* Chief Editor
Bahrain Medical Bulletin
Kingdom of Bahrain

years ago I volunteered to be a member of the ethical committee in order to revive the subject of the code of medical ethics. I have submitted to the committee the proposed ethics. The committee accepted these ethics and distributed them to the senior members of our profession for comments, addition or deletion. What happened? Do we have medical ethics or not, if we do, we need to approve them through the general assembly and make all the members abide by them.

2. Defense of the medical profession, which has been neglected for long time. The economic standard of our profession fell much below that of other Gulf States, compared to the eighties when ours was the highest.

3. Defense of the Professionals, which has been chased by Medico-legal court cases in a country, which lacks laws and regulations that govern these cases and truly lacks independent judicial system.

4. BMS needs to safeguard against the abuse of power by some in the future. It needs to make sure of the participation of the majority in the running of the Bahrain Medical Society. Resist being used as tool by a privileged or influential groups or authorities. The society needs not to copy some of the dictators in the Arab world or copy the dilapidated and ancient Arab league.

5. BMS needs to be established as an independent body rather than extension of the maintenance department (maintaining the doctors in line) of the Ministry of Health. This does not mean to become antagonist without prudence, such as happened recently, where a group of colleagues announced their disagreement to the minister's proposal for making research mandatory for promotion and they antagonized his plan of re-organizing the private practice in the most declarative way in public. Instead, it could have been solved wisely through the in-house machinery. BMS needs to have a committee of wise men in our profession, who by virtue of their maturity can advise and make halt before a destructive step is taken, those who can foresee a compromise between what is decided by the ministry and those affected by the decision.

6. BMS should seek an expansion of the government Medical service in order to meet the demand of the growing population of Bahrain. Each of these twenty-two health centers should be converted to a mini hospital.

7. BMS should make sure that no doctor is employed without salary. If you give service and hold responsibility you have the right to be paid. Bahrain Medical Society should make it mandatory for the interns of AGU to be paid properly as it happens in the poorest country of the world.

8. Trainee doctor should be assured of position with government services if they complete their training successfully. We need to convey compassion not only to our patients but also to our colleagues in our profession; we need to eliminate the suffering inflicted by colleagues to each other.

9. Bahrain Medical Society should play an active role for preparing the new leaders of this profession. The leaders should be prepared scientifically and morally. Scientifically should be prepared by research, workshops, training courses and seminars. Morally should be taught medical ethics, which respect human, animal and the norms of the society at large. Let us hope that in the future, we will have Principles and Code of Ethics, which will spell out the principles of conduct that are deemed appropriate and acceptable by members of Bahrain Medical Society. The principles are not laws, but rather guidelines for honorable behavior deemed necessary by all members. Bahrain Medical Society should have a research committee with a budget that is able to give grants for research, which will improve the health of the citizen.

10. BMS should have pivotal role in defending the private medical sector, which has been harassed and overcharged by the licensing committee. Many of the companies in Bahrain have employed their GP/s while many clinics are not having enough patients. The companies should not have been allowed to do so in order to protect the Bahraini private medical sector as it happens in USA and England.

Many of the companies and some Ministries are not recognizing the sick leave issued by private clinics. It is in contravention with the regulation issued by Civil Service Bureau 602/79-Sick leave 9 a & b, which says that any medical doctor who is licensed by the Ministry of Health can issue a sick leave certificate. Recently the Ministry has introduced a uniform sick leave, without consulting or informing many in the private sector, as if they do not exist. Though, the private medical sector is expanding, yet it is not properly represented in the licensing committee.

11. Corruption needs to be eliminated. As we all heard it, in the General assembly meeting of Bahrain Medical Society on 3 April 2002. That an advisor to the Minister of Health is paid lucrative amount of money for a job in the society, for which, he is not qualified for – beside that he is a full time adviser to MOH? A job that can be done by a better qualified Bahraini doctor who will never charge his own society.

Let us remember the words of His Majesty the King of Bahrain who said on Tuesday 14 May 2002 “The nation cannot develop without national unity, supreme volition and avoidance of all types of corruption. We call on all national institutions to seek these noble objectives.”

The new president will never be able to achieve the previous ambitions except with our combined efforts. Let us cooperate with the ministry to improve the health service delivery and to establish a research directorate, another for medical ethics and third for quality control. BMS should seek the establishment of a medical research directorate with a budget in Bahrain center for research and studies. Let us unite, serve, and represent the interests of each medical practitioner on the Island and their patients. Let us advance the art and science of medicine through state-of-the-art education, research, and learning. Let us aspire to have round the year, life long education program. Let us aspire to have Research committee and research program. Let us put our efforts together to improve our society for the future generations of doctors and if we are not able to do so, let us bring

expatriate to run it. The society should represent the aspiration of the majority not the minority, which is driven by profit making and hijacking the health services to their advantage.

Finally, I would like to conclude with the quotation by Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919), “To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society”.