

## Editorial

# “VIP” Culture & Unethical Practice of Medicine

Anwar Ul Haque

Department of Pathology, Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, Islamabad

VIP stands for Very Important Person! Who is that person? Of course at hospitals all patients are VIPs! Hospitals are established to serve them. Patients without consideration of social status, gender, race, creed and place demand and deserve our utmost respect, sincere attention and care. Sadly this is however not the prevailing VIP culture at many hospitals in Pakistan! An entirely different “VIP” culture exists which may vary from hospital to hospital and from department to department. No doubt at some places true VIP culture exists as mentioned above.

The prevailing “VIP” culture rotates around “VIP” persons. In the current scenario a “VIP” person is the one who demands undue favours! He/she is a spoiled brat who had been addicted to special favours. He/she may have been born with silver *spoon* in his mouth or happens to have links with some high ups “VIPs”! He could be a “patient” (with no patience!), a relative of a patient, a media person, a bureaucrat, a politician, a celebrity, a hospital administrator, a doctor, a paramedical person or a postgraduate student. Luckily we have some normal Non VIP patients and normal doctors, journalists and other health care workers because of these non- “VIPs” the system is working to some extent although may be at the most at 10% efficiency thanks to “VIPs”!

A “VIP” patient and/or his “VIP” relatives may be a fussy politician, a stiff neck member of parliament, an haughty religious personality, a flamboyant sportsman or even a blackmailer media person! A “VIP” does not care about hospital rules, resources and even other patients! He may enter Intensive Care Unit along with an army of his security guards and media persons ruining all efforts of infection control. This may pose serious life threats to all other patients including his own!

Under the immense social pressure of “VIP” if some thing goes wrong, immediate inquiries are set up. No body at that time sees who appointed the “VIP” hospital administrators and granted undue promotions destroying all systems and working environment. The incompetent and dishonest “VIP”

administrators will go to any extent to please high ups in order to protect their chairs so that they can keep siphoning undue privileges and resources.

Some other glaring examples of “VIP” culture include hospital transport and food which is robbed left and right by the “VIP” administrators and their family members! The hospital funds are stolen in the name of prescribed drugs and hospital time is flinched without any remorse or shame. Some “VIP” Executive Directors took hospital ward boys and tractor to work on his personal farms! “VIP” in all its form and shades no matter, who practices it, is a sign of insecurity, inferiority complex and injustice. It will not be so wrong to say this reflects hospital terrorism where patients and honest workers are terrorized all the time!

The “VIP” doctors and paramedical staff get appointments on favouritism and get fast tract promotions while their more competent and hard working colleagues are totally deprived. Some of these blue eye people simply won’t work! Why should they? They however have ultra sensitive long noses for money making opportunities and foreign trips which they hardly ever miss! A “VIP” consultant used hospital ambulance to transport his households along with his dogs to his new house! These “VIPs” may simply disappear without approval of Head of the Department for months and nothing will happen to them!

The “VIP” pharmacists make sure that drugs are regularly stolen and the hospital pharmacy becomes a dumping place for substandard, poor quality, disfigured and malformed drugs. These drugs would have been otherwise thrown in the garbage. Some even forge signatures of consultants to write fake prescriptions and pocket the drugs themselves. Nothing will happen to them due to their superb connections with evil and destructive hidden forces! If court orders an inquiry, the corrupt persons sitting at high position will become part of the inquiry committees which will then give a prompt not guilty verdict!

The hospital purchase committees become

nests of highly effective “VIP” rats leaving no opportunity to nibble the hospital resources! As a result substandard reagents and equipments are dumped in the hospitals devastatingly affecting the quality of the patient care! *Despite concrete proofs of corruption*, the “VIPs” will not loose their positions. They will instead get backing from other “VIPs” as the latter care less about the destruction of the institutions. The inquiry committees headed by “VIP” chairmen and members will try to let the culprit get off the hook.

The laboratory and pharmacy commissions and kickbacks are being made halal and kosher! Ironically these are even justified on the “moral” grounds! Similarly hospitals are regularly used for promoting private practices without pain to the conscience of some highly educated doctors and paramedical staff!

Then there is “VIP” media which uses threats and black mailing to get what they want, no matter how ridiculous it might be! Unbelievable but true; a notorious media blackmailer took hospital intensive care bed with him to his private office and kept it for months! He very reluctantly returned it!

Another reason for “VIP” culture is lack of sound training and absence of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which result in panic situations and lack of confidence in the system. As a result honest and non “VIP” people including media persons start using approaches and connections otherwise they will not get the attention and treatment. The situation is created by the “VIPs” of all sorts as pointed above! Usually there are no standard operating procedures (SOPs) Even if these are present they have only ceremonial value. If SOPs were in place and clearly adhered to, tension and panic will disappear!

The Government must appoint honest, well qualified, experienced academicians as administrators with good track records and certainly NOT on the whims of this and that minister. The administration must help the departments to develop themselves. It should be servant rather than ruler and it must be regularly evaluated by the end users.

In order to remove “VIP” culture and unethical medical practice we must develop good systems so that no one would feel threatened and no one would require extra favour for appointments and treatment. The Government must increase the health budget and hire more doctors and nurses so that each patient can be adequately seen and treated. Special squads must not be called upon to treat “Important” people. This will happen only when “important” people will feel that without pulling strings they will

get adequate treatment. When President Reagan was shot, the newly graduated doctors from University of Kansas; took care of him. No senior professor was called in. This was the level of confidence which in turn was due to superb education, training and in place SOPs. Needless to say that Both Reagan and Bradley made remarkable recovery!

The performance of staff should be evaluated on weekly basis. All corrupt, incompetent and unwilling workers should be fired after giving 2 or 3 warnings. Their empty slots should then be readily filled on merit. The faculty must be promoted in transparent way on strict objective criteria. Until and unless we have the system of Merit and Justice we all will be the victims of our own actions, inactions and bad deeds! The Glorious Quran orders us not to kill ourselves. Quran clearly identifies moral decay as the reasons for economic collapse and lack of blessing and satisfaction. Amidst plenty many are “starving”! Neglecting the clear Ayahs of Allah Ta’lah will bring due pain and misery to us and to the society!

Doctors should serve as community leaders. They must resist nepotism in all its shades and forms. Merit and Justice should be the order of the day! The teaching hospitals must have a vibrant full time academic atmosphere with good pay to the staff and . a complete ban on outside private practice!

We need to purge greed and materialism. No methodology other than Quran can bring splendid changes with superb speed. When father of Medicine Ibn-e-Sina was offered “any thing he wanted” by the King of Bukhara after his full recovery from a deadly disease under his treatment, Ibn-e-Sina regretted and sought only permission to read precious books in his library. Ibn-e-Sina’s book of “Law of Medicine” remained standard textbook of medicine for 600 years in European Medical Colleges! Ibn-e-Sina developed that vision and moral strength through Quran which he learnt at the age of six and by 22 he was the world’s most renowned physician. The Prophet (PBUH) in mere 23 years of his Prophet life lifted the Muslims from bottom pit to the skies in every field. In subsequent 100 years all modern sciences were founded; a clear reflection of the fact that if we hold this rope of Allah (Quran), the way Prophet (PBUH) did, we can travel the journey of millennium in a few years! If we are able to develop a culture of merit and justice where honesty, competency and hard work reigned supreme and rewarded while apathy, dishonesty and lack of hard work is sternly punished, the menace of “VIP” culture will slowly disappear.