

Rampant Quackery

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Quackery is an unscientific, unproven and un-established method of treatment and patient management. It may or may not have ulterior motives! If there are ulterior motives then it also constitutes a fraud! Apart from money loss, quackery may have serious health consequences including delay in institution of appropriate optimal patient management allowing relentless progress of disease, transforming a potentially curable ailment into an incurable one and complications attributable to effects of quack medicine and at times even sudden death! It's not uncommon to see people losing their precious kidneys and dying due to some "Hakeemi", homeopathic prescriptions and excessive use of pain killers. In one incidence lead was found in the powder given by a hakeem to a patient. The alert hematologist picked up the case after observing basophilic stippling in the erythrocytes! We see newspapers publishing all sorts of advertisements full of tall and baseless claims of cure of chronic illnesses! On the other hand multinational companies bring numerous advertisements of products of beautification and growing hair thick and long! Some even claim absorption of proteins through the hair! Many soap manufacturers make claim. s about killing bacteria based on pseudoscientific data. As a matter of fact dermatologists find these soaps more harmful to the skin! Quackery is practiced not only by illiterate but also by some highly educated dishonest doctors who take advantage of despair, hopelessness and misery of patients of chronic illnesses such as terminal malignancy, systemic sclerosis and poliomyelitis and advanced crippling rheumatoid arthritis. Then there are so called spiritual healers, greedy pseudo peers and magicians! They pretend to treat all sorts of physical and psychological ailments! These are the problems but what are the solutions? The responsibility is on the shoulders of the Government, regulatory bodies, professional organizations, civic society and conscientious individuals! The

Government with the help of professional organizations and individuals should bring appropriate laws to effectively curb quackery in its all dimensions. The regulatory and professional bodies need to be made truly representative by allowing all members to vote through post (postal ballots) as doctors are extremely busy and it's not possible for them to travel long distances and stand in long quo to vote! Unless we make these bodies truly representative and accountable these may remain in the hands of highly manipulative individuals and groups!

Its irony that a large number of doctors leave the country and never return back creating a vacuum that is then filled by quakes! We must stop this brain drain from the country and we should bring back our doctors with provision of better job environments for them!

It seems that we have reverted more than 13 centuries back. Muslim Caliphs Walid and al-Muqtadir 1300 years ago instituted the medical licensing examinations and medical licensing. They eliminated quackery and malpractice all together in huge Muslim land in which sun never set. The Norman king of Sicily, Roger II (1095-1154) kept the requirement of physicians taking an examination before they could practice medicine. The Norman conquest, together with the licensing of physicians, the schooling, examining, and practicing of the medical arts, brought these traditions to medieval Europe, where they became the foundation of Western medical customary practice. But today in many developing countries situation is even worse than the era before these great Caliphs! In developed countries due to their better law & order situation brute quackery may be quite rare but sophisticated quackery is present with active participation of multinational drug industry and international regulatory bodies! Bird flu and Swine flu

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vaccines are sold to a large number of people who do not require them at all. In some 3rd world country hospitals medicines for common ailments such as tuberculosis, malaria and anemia may not be available but one may find the bird & swine flu vaccines thus depriving masses of their basic health needs!

It's absolutely necessary to instill high moral and ethical values in our curricula; both for health workers and non healthcare workers! Media must be tightly regulated banning promotion of all sorts of quackery. Simple laws are not sufficient; we need to effectively implement them too! Quackery is a big monster today engulfing health and lives of many and it's our responsibility to root it out completely.