

College of American Pathologists (CAP) Guidelines and Need for appropriate Legislation!

Anwar Ul Haque

Department of Pathology, Azad Jammu & Kashmir Medical College, Azad Jammu & Kashmir University, Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir, Pakistan

In this issue of International Journal of Pathology there is an audit of Histopathology reports compliance with guidelines of College of American Pathologists (CAP). CAP is world's largest College of Pathologists. It's dedication to monitor and maintain quality of the Pathology Departments in terms of working, teaching, training and laboratory tests is superb! The College has been actively pursuing supervision of pathology laboratories in their all aspects. Quality assurance testings and visits of CAP inspectors to have onsite inspection of the Laboratories and Pathology Departments in terms of quality and adequacy of facilities, staffing, safety, powers of hiring and firing granted to the heads of the departments, and training of the residents and other staff is highly commendable. This has tremendously contributed towards high quality dependable laboratory results across the nation! Needless to say these quality tests go a long way to optimum and quality treatment and management of the patients! When I was resident in Pathology in USA I was impressed with CAP's inspectors who were highly respected pathologists and their fair, honest, unbiased thorough, meticulous and comprehensive conduct of inspection! I am witness to the fact that If the Pathology Department found inadequate; it was stopped from conducting postgraduate training program. This is in sharp contrast in some developing countries where flagrant biases and abuse of authorities are rampant which of course directly translates in poor patient management, high morbidity and mortality and extreme suffering of the society!

CAP has created many guidelines and protocols for different procedures and reporting on various specimens! In surgical pathology (Histopathology) for example CAP guidelines are available on grossing and microscopic examination on various tissues and organs. These thorough and well prepared guidelines assure adequate, meaningful and useful examination of the submitted tissues and generation of quality reports. Regular audit or checks are necessary to evalu-

ate compliance with these guidelines and to rectify any short coming in time!

Continuing self assessment and accountability of one's own acts and performance is very healthy thing to do for individuals, institutions and the society!

Quran e Majeed in Surah ash-Shams has clearly emphasised the importance of self-accountability! It says that indeed one who purifies succeeds and that one who doesn't perishes! This statement follows mentioning of Allah's utmost wisdom and power in creating and managing Sun, Moon, Day & Night and human conscience. One who is the Wisest and the Most powerful is giving this pearl of wisdom about accountability and continuously purifying oneself! Alas many of us hardly do serious and painful accountability of our acts!

Checklists and protocols are important guides for us to carry out things in the right way! These provide us the guidelines for best proper procedures for tissue examinations which are so important for the treatment of the patients! Without hard work, continuous accountability and assessment no real good change can occur in the society.

It's unfortunate that some developing countries are not adhering to these time tested sensible checklists and guidelines and thus seriously compromising patient care. It's at times shocking to see that at some hospitals surgically removed specimens are not sent to the Surgical Pathology (Histopathology) Laboratory for proper documentation and examination. Thus, confirmation or absence of the disease, disease extent, treatment effects and any incidental findings cannot be ascertained affecting many facets of the diseases Such examination is also important for determining national prevalence rates of the diseases and for various other statistical purposes. This data is also required for better nationwide planning of various healthcare activities and facilities. Accurate recording of findings may have important medico-legal implications! Thus by not submitting tissues to the Surgical Pathology (His-

topathology Laboratories) quality patient care is compromised at many points. We have seen some apparently qualified surgeons questioning the need for sending every specimen to the pathology laboratory for examination! One can easily guess the status of training they would be providing to their residents! The College of Physicians & Surgeons of Pakistan (CPSP) has made Pathology rotations mandatory for residents of different specialties; however it's noted that at times these rotations are not taken seriously by the various departments. They allow residents to avail their annual vacations and leaves during this period thus effectively nullifying all the benefits of these rotations.

Most countries have legislated making it mandatory to send all surgically removed tissues and implants to the pathology department for proper examination and

documentation. In Pakistan we absolutely need such legislations and strict adherence to the law! There is a dire need to bring healthy change in the society and this change cannot happen without active participation of each and every individual and department and without instilling strong ethical values in our curricula from early on and strengthening these at all levels! We request Pakistan Medical & Dental Council (PMDC), Higher Education Commission (HEC), College of Physicians & Surgeons (CPSP), National Assembly and Senate to take note of this. Without quality dependable laboratory tests question of provision of quality healthcare does not arise. Appropriate legislation and implementation of law is utmost need of Pakistan!

Prof. Anwar Ul Haque is Fellow of College of American Pathologists.