

EDITORIAL

Unethical practices in the medical profession: implications for healthcare integrity and patient trust

Mahanta P*

ABSTRACT

The increasing prevalence of unethical actions within the medical profession, as well as the negative impact these practices have on patient safety and public trust, are the topics that are discussed in this editorial. Fraudulent billing, breaches of confidentiality, research exploitation, discriminatory behaviour, overprescribing, severe violations, and conflicts of interest are some of the most important examples of unethical conduct. The primary drivers of these behaviours are financial incentives and inadequate regulatory oversight. This type of conduct causes patients to suffer actual injury and contributes to the widespread mistrust that exists in healthcare facilities. To address these difficulties, it is necessary to implement stricter rules, boost openness in medical practices, and improve the ethical education provided to healthcare personnel. The primary objectives may involve restoring integrity in the medical industry and safeguarding patient welfare.

Keywords: Patients, healthcare providers, unethical activities, and the medical profession

Cite this article: : Mahanta P. Unethical practices in the medical profession: implications for healthcare integrity and patient trust. *Int J Health Res Medico Leg Prae*. 2026 Jan-Jun;12(1):5-7. Doi: 10.31741/ijhrmlp.v12.i1.2026.1

INTRODUCTION

The term “unethical practice” refers to actions taken by healthcare providers that violate recognised moral, ethical, legal, and professional standards. The medical profession employs these practices. These activities have become more frequent and diverse recently. Several factors, such as the commercialisation of healthcare, the increasing complexity of the system, and inadequate regulatory oversight, contribute to this growth. This tendency poses a global challenge to the integrity of medical practice, compromising patient safety, eroding public trust, and threatening its integrity.

THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED

Financial incentives frequently encourage unethical actions such as overbilling, unnecessary treatments, and accepting kickbacks from

pharmaceutical firms. These incentives, which include substantial monetary rewards and profit-driven goals, are common. The presence of weak regulatory frameworks and insufficient monitoring allows these behaviours to persist undetected and unpunished, creating a climate conducive to unprofessional behaviour. In certain contexts, the societal acceptance of questionable procedures and hierarchical medical institutions inhibits the disclosure of unethical behaviour and contributes to its perpetuation. In addition, understaffed, unrealistic, and overburdened healthcare systems contribute to pressures that can undermine ethical standards.

Fraudulent billing includes both charging for services that were not actually provided and inflating medical bills to generate profits. The term “overprescription of medication” refers to the practice of prescribing drugs that are

either unnecessary or excessive, and where pharmaceutical incentives frequently play a role. A conflict of interest occurs when medical professionals make decisions regarding patient care for their own financial gain rather than prioritising the patient's well-being.

CONSEQUENCES FOR PATIENTS AND FOR SOCIETY

Unethical methods directly harm patients because they lead to incorrect diagnoses, unneeded treatments, and drug errors, which in turn cause patients to suffer both physically and psychologically. The lack of trust drives people to delay or avoid seeking medical attention, which ultimately leads to worse health outcomes. Furthermore, practices such as fraudulent billing and unnecessary surgeries impose significant financial constraints on patients. Every practice in the medical field has substantial repercussions, including legal consequences for healthcare providers and broader implications for the health of the general public. The medical community needs to analyse past errors to prevent unethical behaviour and ensure that patient welfare remains the primary focus of healthcare practices. It is for this reason that the healthcare system ought to make the adoption of stringent ethical principles a priority, encourage open communication, and promote accountability to regain patients' trust and improve the quality of care they receive.

A LARGER RANGE OF SOCIETAL EFFECTS

The gradual erosion of public confidence is weakening the credibility of healthcare organisations. The rising costs of healthcare affect society by driving up insurance premiums and increasing public health expenditures. Violating ethical standards contributes to a culture of mistrust between patients and healthcare personnel. Damage to the medical profession's reputation may, over time, deter individuals from entering the field.

A CHALLENGE IN REGULATORY AND ETHICAL MATTERS

Loopholes in the law, such as imprecise definitions and insufficient sanctions, allow unethical medical practices to continue and make it more difficult to prosecute those who engage in them. There are obstacles regulatory organisations face in enforcement, including limited resources, delays caused by bureaucratic procedures, and inadequate protections for whistleblowers. Additionally, healthcare workers face ethical conundrums when balancing patient autonomy and confidentiality with the obligation to report unethical behaviour, making accountability increasingly difficult.

THE METHODS OF PREVENTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF STRATEGIES

The authorities should adopt comprehensive laws and policies that impose strict penalties for unethical activity, mandate regular audits, and boost oversight by medical boards and regulatory organisations. Strengthening regulations requires implementing these measures. Ensure openness: To foster accountability, encourage open disclosure of medical practices, billing procedures, and conflicts of interest through public reporting systems and patient access to information. Enhance ethics education by including comprehensive ethics training in the medical curriculum and continuing professional development to guarantee that healthcare providers are aware of ethical norms and the repercussions of engaging in unethical activity.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR STRATEGIES

To safeguard patients and regain the public's trust, implement stricter rules, promote transparency, and provide comprehensive ethics education to address unethical behaviour

in the medical field. According to their findings, unethical actions in the medical field are on the rise, largely due to the combination of financial pressures and inadequate oversight. These tendencies put patient safety at risk and erode trust. Implementing more stringent responsibility and enhanced ethical education for healthcare personnel are effective solutions.

The restrictions should be strengthened to close any legal loopholes and ensure accountability. Encourage openness by increasing the number of patients who have access to information and transparent reporting. To cultivate a culture of integrity, ethics education should be strengthened. Encourage patient and community participation in monitoring healthcare practices.

CORRESPONDING ADDRESS:

*Professor and Head (Corresponding author)
Forensic Medicine and Toxicology
Nalbari Medical College, Nalbari, Assam, India
Email: drpmahanta@gmail.com
Editor-in-Chief, IJHRMLP