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Editorial

Medical humanities, humane medicine and self-reflection

In this issue of the *Galle Medical Journal*, we publish a letter from a senior clinician reflecting on a patient encounter that he has had as a medical student starting his clinical training. In his letter Ruberu reflects on a patient with end stage renal disease. He reflects on the patient's demeanour, issues beyond the illness and his unfortunate demise (with a background of paucity of specific management strategies at that point of time). Contents of this thoughtful letter were so very evocative, and we invited for peer comments, and we publish comments from De Silva, Fernando and Ragunathan together with the letter. All call for a humane approach towards patients, and to look at patients beyond the mere illness with empathy. This is of immense relevance to both practicing doctors and medical students.

Many medical school courses have incorporated medical humanities as an area of study. It is an excellent measure in the right direction. Medical humanities is a cross disciplinary subject with inputs from ethics, psychology, social sciences etc. Unfortunately, in the past, tendency has been to produce doctors who are only knowledgeable and skillful. This myopic approach has taken away the human core values from medical practitioners. The society needs doctors who are knowledgeable, ethical, skillful, and compassionate. Compassion emanates from cognitive empathy.

While the subject of medical humanities formalizes the knowledge base required, we need translation of the knowledge and skills to real life practice beyond rhetoric. Medical humanities as **humane medicine** in practice. As a journal, we intend to promote and publish knowledge base and progress in medical humanities while formally publishing research papers. Today we need practitioners of humane medicine.

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Editors - The Galle Medical Journal