

## A study on Knowledge and Awareness on Duties and Responsibilities of a Doctor in a Teaching Hospital Hyderabad Telangana

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### Abstract

Medical practitioner has a tremendous role in the society in saving the life of human beings; this can be achieved when they practice their profession with utmost care and responsibility, Doctor's duties are regulated by law enforcement authorities and the National medical council, any breach of their duties can lead to a medico legal issue. The aim of the study is to analyze the knowledge and awareness of doctors regarding their duties and responsibilities towards their patients.

A cross sectional study on knowledge and awareness on duties and responsibilities of a doctor was conducted in a tertiary care teaching hospital, a total of 100 doctors have participated in the study, doctors who are registered in Medical Council of India and working in the institution as postgraduates, tutors, senior residents and assistant professors were included in this study. Data was collected in the form of a questionnaire after obtaining an informed consent from all the participants. Doctors who are not willing to participate in the study are excluded. Each duty and responsibility was assessed by grading based on their knowledge and awareness. Data analysis was done with the help of Microsoft Excel software.

Study results revealed that 12.9% of doctors are having poor knowledge, 19.3% of doctors have fair knowledge and 67.8% of doctors are having good knowledge on their duties and responsibilities. Periodical Continuous medical education programs can achieve better results.

**Key words:** Medical practitioner, Duties, knowledge and awareness.

### Introduction

“Every right implies a responsibility, every opportunity is an obligation and every possession is a

duty” these words hold true in every Physician's life. Every doctor mainly has two important duties; one is medical and another is legal. Saving the life of the patient should be the first and foremost priority of a

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doctor. The duties and responsibilities of a doctor are laid down since ancient days which came into lime light after Nazis atrocities on war prisoners during the Second World War.

The World Medical Association (WMA) was established in the year 1945 and started functioning officially in Paris since 1947<sup>1</sup>. Its aim is to establish standards among the doctors in relation to human ethics, duties and responsibilities all over the world. The World Medical Association of 3<sup>rd</sup> general assembly at London in 1949, 20<sup>th</sup> world medical assembly Sydney in August 1968, 35<sup>th</sup> world medical assembly Italy in October 1983 and the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA general assembly South Africa in October 2006 formulated guidelines on duties of a medical practitioner towards their patients, community and colleagues.

Medical Council of India prescribed rules and regulations on professional conduct, ethics, etiquette and duties of a registered medical practitioner by Indian Medical Council (Professional conduct Etiquette and ethics regulation 2002) act which was amended in 2009<sup>2</sup>. As per this act every doctor is supposed to follow the rules and regulation given by medical council of India from time to time, any violation of code of ethics and etiquette is considered as infamous conduct which is a punishable offence by penal erasure. Any violation of a duty by a medical practitioner can result into a damage to the patient is considered as medical negligence, where patient can file a legal case against the doctor which attracts imprisonment, fine or both.

From the inception of consumer protection act the number of cases filed against the doctors in relation to medical negligence are increasing day by day, this indirectly represents the dereliction of duties by a registered medical practitioners are increasing. Most of the time dereliction of duty occurs either by the act of omission or lack of awareness.

The aim and Objectives of this study is to assess the knowledge and awareness among the doctors on their duties and responsibilities and to explain how insufficient knowledge can lead to medical negligence. This study will enlighten the doctors on their duties and responsibilities to make them more vigilant and minimizes the cases filed against the doctors and the institutions.

## Material and Methods

A cross sectional prospective study was conducted on knowledge and awareness among the doctors on their duties and responsibilities. Study was conducted in a tertiary care teaching hospital, Hyderabad. 100 doctors have participated in the study conducted from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022. Data was collected in the form of a questionnaire after obtaining an informed consent from all the participants before commencement of the study. The participants were explained that the name of the doctor participating in this study will remain anonymous.

Doctors who are registered in Medical Council of India and working in the institution as a postgraduate's, tutors, senior residents and assistant professors were included in this study. Doctors who are not willing to participate in the study are excluded.

A questionnaire on duties and responsibilities of a doctor formulated by the guidelines issued by World medical association and Medical council of India<sup>3,4</sup> are as follows.

1. Duty to exercise reasonable degree of skill and knowledge.
2. Duties with regard to attendance and examination.
3. Duty to furnish proper and suitable medicines.
4. Duty to give proper instructions.
5. Duty to prescribe generic name of the drug in capital letters.
6. Duty to control and warn.
7. Duty to display recognized medical degrees, diplomas and honors to his name as suffix as recognized by the Medical council of India.
8. Duties towards third parties.
9. Duties towards children and adults incapable of taking care of themselves.
10. Duty to obtain informed consent.
11. Duty to notify certain notifiable diseases.
12. Duties under Geneva Convention.
13. Duties in regard to consultation.
14. Duty to maintain professional secrecy.

15. Duty to update knowledge and skill for renewal of license.
16. Duty with regard to medical records maintenance.
17. Duty to expose unethical conduct of a professional colleague.
18. Duty to display professional fee and charges.
19. Duty to display registration number.
20. Duty to follow laws and regulations in the interest of public health.

Each duty and responsibility was assessed by grading as poor, fair, good, and excellent, based on

their knowledge and awareness. Data was collected for all 20 duties from each individual participant. Poor is considered as unaware and fair, good and excellent are considered as aware. The data was taken into MS excel sheet and was analyzed by using computer software, MS Excel.

## Results

A cross sectional study on knowledge and awareness on duties and responsibilities of doctors in health care system was conducted in a territory care hospital, the following results were found.

**Table 1: Percentage of result of duties and responsibilities.**

S. No.	Duties and responsibilities	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
1	Duty to exercise reasonable degree of skill and knowledge.	10	15	47	28
2	Duties with regard to attendance and examination.	6	26	35	33
3	Duty to furnish proper and suitable medicines.	3	18	39	40
4	Duty to give proper instructions.	5	6	33	56
5	Duty to prescribe generic name of the drug in capital letters.	8	27	29	36
6	Duty to control and warn.	5	16	43	36
7	Duty to display recognized medical degrees, diplomas and honors to his name as suffix as recognized by the Medical council of India.	7	21	40	32
8	Duties towards third parties.	23	26	31	20
9	Duties towards children and adults incapable of taking care of themselves.	5	29	37	29
10	Duty to obtain informed consent.	2	15	30	53
11	Duty to notify certain notifiable diseases.	13	21	24	42
12	Duties under Geneva Convention.	94	3	2	1
13	Duties in regard to consultation.	13	33	33	21
14	Duty to maintain professional secrecy.	7	7	31	55
15	Duty to update knowledge and skill for renewal of license.	9	12	28	51
16	Duty with regard to medical records maintenance.	6	28	35	31
17	Duty to expose unethical conduct of a professional colleague.	18	21	29	32
18	Duty to display professional fee and charges.	13	23	31	33
19	Duty to display registration number.	4	13	30	53
20	Duty to follow laws and regulations in the interest of public health.	7	26	27	40

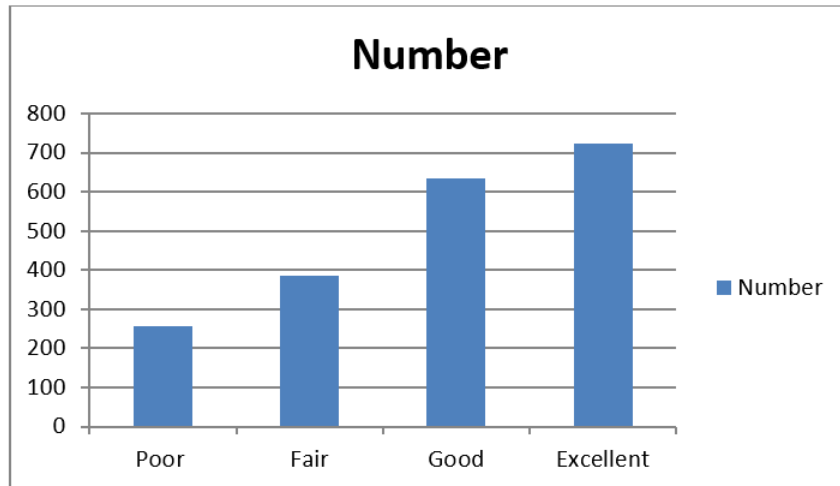


Figure 1: Results of all the duties in terms of total number of doctors participated.

Overall 2000 data was collected from 100 participants for 20 duties, among them; 258 were poor, 386 were fair, 634 were good and 722 were excellent.

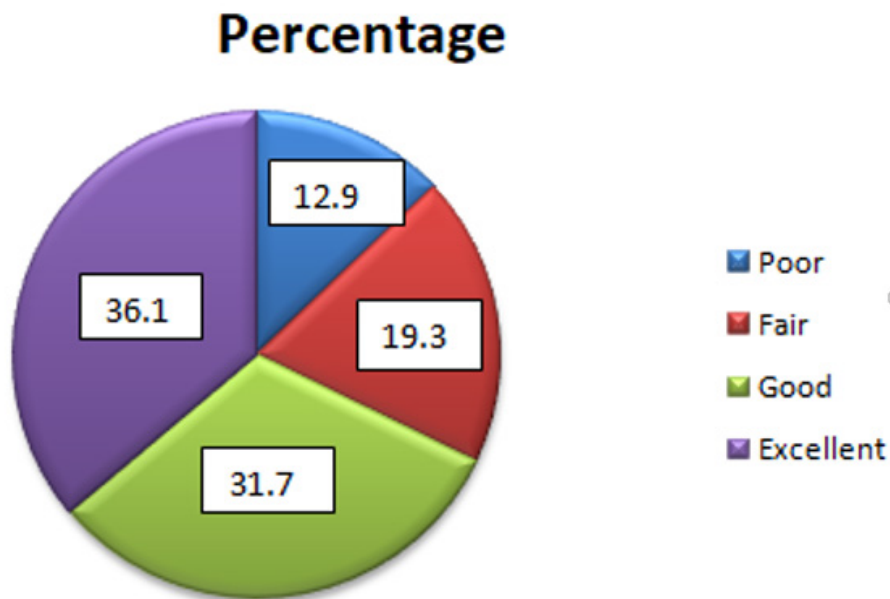


Figure-2: Representing the results of all the duties of doctors participated.

### Discussion

A cross sectional study on duties and responsibilities of doctors in medical practice was conducted in a territory care teaching hospital of Telangana. 100 doctors including post graduates, tutors, senior residents and assistant professors working in both clinical and non clinical departments have participated in the study. We found that the majority of doctors are well aware of their duties and responsibilities.

A doctor must exercise reasonable degree of skill and knowledge; it can be achieved by learning skills and by attaining higher degrees, the skills and knowledge of an MBBS doctor cannot be compared with specialist and super specialist doctor. In our study we observed only 10% are unaware. A practitioner is not liable because some other doctor of greater skill and knowledge would have prescribed a better treatment or operated better in the same circumstances.

In regard to duty of attendance and examination, when a practitioner agrees to attend a patient he is under an obligation to attend as long as it requires attention, failure to attend amounts to breach of duty. In our study we noticed that 94% are aware and 6% are poor in awareness. It is the duty of the doctor to furnish proper and suitable medicines to their patients; doctor must write legible prescription and give detailed instructions. Illegible prescription or wrong medication can lead to danger to the health of the patient, we observed only 3% of doctors are not having sufficient knowledge. Doctor should prescribe the drug by its generic name and in capital letters, only 8% of the doctors are not aware.

Doctor must give proper instructions regarding the health conditions, medication prescribed and proper diet to their patients, failure to give proper instructions can be danger to their patient and amounts to medical negligence. In our study we noticed 95% of doctors are aware of this duty. A physician has a duty to warn patients regarding the dangers involved in medical condition and in the use of prescribed medication under the concept of 'reasonable foreseeability', failure can result into danger to the life of the patient and amount to be negligence. Study revealed that 95% of doctors are aware of this duty. Medical practitioner can display recognized medical degree, diploma and honors to his name as suffix as recognized by medical council of India. Our study shows 93% of doctors are aware.

Doctors not only have duty towards their patient but also towards third parties, failure to give proper instructions of a disease may spread to the other members of the family or community. Study revealed that 23% are not aware of this duty. Doctors have duty towards children and adults who are incapable of taking care of themselves doctor should take an extra care in providing services to these patients. In our study we found 95% are well aware.

Doctor must obtain an informed consent before any procedure, section 2(11) of consumer protection act states that not taking consent is considered as a deficiency in medical service. Our study revealed that 98% of the doctors are aware of this duty.

Doctor should notify certain notifiable diseases to public health authority to avoid community

spread of diseases, failure can be a great danger to the community, and study revealed that 13% are not aware. Every medical practitioner must follow the duties under Geneva Convention, which lays down that it protects the wounded or sick of the armed forces (first convention), ship-wrecked persons (second convention), prisoners of war (third convention), or civilians of enemy nationality (fourth convention), are to be treated without any adverse distinction. Our study reveals that 94% of doctors are unaware of this duty. Physician has a duty to take consultation other than his specialty, whenever a serious complication develops by his patient. Failure to provide services of higher specialty when it require, amounts to be negligence. 13% of the participants are not aware of this duty.

Doctor must maintain professional secrecy, should not divulge the health conditions of patient to anyone without consent, violation of this duty tantamount to infamous conduct, patient can file a defamation case against the doctor under section 499 IPC. 93% of doctors are aware of this duty. Every medical practitioner must renew his license once in 5 years; doctors should update their professional knowledge and skills regularly from time to time. 91% of the doctors are aware of this duty.

Physicians must maintain records of their patients, both in-patient and out-patient records must keep in custody for a period of 3 years in case of non medico legal cases. In case of MLC records, there is no time limit. Our study shows that only 6% doctors are not aware. Doctors suppose to follow medical ethics guidelines issued by National Medical Council of India and it is their duty to expose and inform to the NMC regarding unethical practice of their fellow doctors. 82% of the doctors are aware of this duty. Doctor must display his professional fee and charges in their consultation room to avoid future financial litigations. In our study we observed 13% of doctors are unaware. Doctor should display their medical registration number on their name boards and in their prescription letter head to avoid fraudulent medical practice, 4% of doctors are unaware of this duty. Doctors should obey the Laws and regulations prescribed by the Government from time to time, any violation attracts legal punishments and it is their duty to obey the Law of land. In our study we noticed 93% of doctors are aware.

Our study results revealed that 12.9% of doctors are having poor knowledge, 19.3% of doctors have fair knowledge and 67.8% of doctors are having good knowledge on their duties and responsibilities. We noticed the poor grading was observed in post graduate participants.

There were not many studies in regard duties and responsibilities of a doctor found in India and abroad. Studies in relation to ethical duties of a medical practitioner were found.

Study conducted by Surjith Singh et. al. on Knowledge, awareness and practice of ethics among doctors in tertiary care hospital at AIIMS Jodhpur, the study was different and focused on ethical practice, one of the components in their study is professional secrecy which is considered as a duty in our study, they found 9.6% of doctors were unaware whereas it is 7% in our study, which is almost similar.<sup>5</sup>

### Conclusion

Duties of a medical practitioner were laid down after Nazis atrocities against war prisoners during 2nd world war, World Medical association formulated various duties for a doctor to follow on their day to day practice. Any deviation of the duty is called dereliction, if it is resulting into damage is called negligence. Many negligence cases are reporting against the doctors are due to their breach of duties. In our study we observed 67.8% of doctors are having good knowledge on their duties and responsibilities whereas 19.3% are fair and only 12.9% of doctors

are having poor knowledge. This can be overcome by periodical trainings and Continuous medical education programs at the institutional level.

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