To,
Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya
Hon'ble Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Room No. 348-A,
Nirman Bhawan, New Delhi - 110011

Subject: Patients are not the training ground

Dear Sir,

Namaste,

Greetings from Health Parliament and International Patients' Union.

I am writing to seek your intervention to a matter of utmost importance concerning patient safety, medical ethics, and informed consent within the medical fraternity.

In our collective pursuit to empower patients, the emphasis has always been on ensuring patients' lawful consent and active participation in the decision-making process and communication between patients and their healthcare providers. However, a deeply concerning practice that has serious repercussions for patients' well-being has come to our notice, causing a loss of trust in healthcare and the medical profession. We have observed instances where patients are being treated by medical students, interns, or junior doctors without the patient's knowledge or informed consent, potentially endangering their lives and perhaps causing irreparable harm.

The absence of policy initiatives to regulate and manage treatments provided by inexperienced doctors without informing the patients about the same erodes patients' trust in the medical profession.

We propose:

1. Only fully trained and qualified doctors should be allowed to treat patients.
2. In case a trainee (medical student or intern in training) is examining the patient, the patient should be provided with clear information. Only after the patient's informed consent should the 'medical students and interns in training be allowed to be present during the treatment as observers.
3. Ideally, such medical students and interns in training should only be treating patients if under the supervision of a senior doctor in attendance and attention!

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4. The emergency and trauma wards should be a strict 'no' for entry for these 'Doctors under training,' as time is of critical for interventions, and a minor error of judgment can lead to the loss of life.
5. Medical students and interns should not wear white aprons but of a different colour (amber or yellow) to distinguish whether they are medical students or trainees.
6. We also recommend distinguishing medical students and doctors in training by requiring them to wear identification badges clearly labelled as "Medical Student" or "Intern".
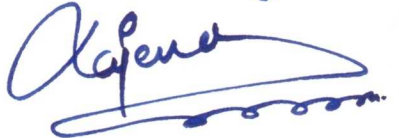
Patients should never be regarded as a training ground for the medical community, and I am sure you would not like your family to be treated by a student!

The future doctors of India should be trained and skilled in using the latest technology without jeopardizing the lives of patients. We advocate for the judicious use of technology to enhance the skills of medical professionals, creating a healthcare system where both future doctors and patients are genuinely empowered.

In my interactions with you, I have seen a genuine desire in you to create a transformation at the grassroots, and this one decision will be the biggest in the interest of patients, doctors, and healthcare delivery, which will play an important role in rebuilding the trust in the healthcare system and improve outcomes. You have done incredible work during COVID-19, and your untiring efforts have brought great changes. I am sure you will do the needful at the earliest.

I thank you for your attention to this critical issue. I am available to discuss this matter further at your earliest convenience and explore collaborative efforts towards a safer, more transparent healthcare environment.

Health Parliament is the world's leading think-tank on healthcare policy issues, and the International Patients' Union is a patients' platform founded to address the challenges related to accessibility, affordability, and quality of healthcare faced by patients across India.

With best regards

Dr. Rajendra Pratap Gupta, PhD.
Founder
Health Parliament I International Patents' Union
Former Advisor to the Union Health Minister