

Being a good doctor: More than just technical skills and medical knowledge

Nik Mookerji

University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, Canada

Cite as: Mookerji N. Being a good doctor: More than just technical skills and medical knowledge. *Can Urol Assoc J* 2023;17(8Suppl3):S171. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5489/cuaj.8504>

As a medical student, my primary focus was on achieving success in my career, but a profound experience with a palliative patient opened my eyes to the significance of connecting with patients and listening to their stories. This encounter shifted my perspective and set me on a path to becoming a better doctor.

During my fourth year of medical school, I had the privilege of caring for a remarkable 96-year-old patient who had been the first female tank operator during World War II. She had lived an extraordinary life, outliving most of her friends and husband. Despite being admitted with a hip fracture, she remained positive and cherished her close-knit family of 24 grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren. Her hip fracture was not amenable to surgical treatment, and after her condition worsened, she elected for comfort care. Being there for her, listening to her life story, understanding her values, and providing support in her last days was a deeply humbling experience. This encounter taught me the importance of prioritizing patients' individual needs and preferences in healthcare.

Effective communication lies at the heart of medicine, not only when interacting with patients but also in collaborating with colleagues and healthcare professionals. By taking the time to listen to patients' stories and understand their perspectives, we can deliver more personalized care tailored to

their specific requirements. As a surgical resident, I have encountered numerous instances where compassionate communication played a pivotal role in patient care, transcending technical skills and medical knowledge. For instance, a 56-year-old patient with prostate cancer came to our clinic seeking answers to his concerns about the procedure. Understanding his fears about potential side effects and quality of life, and effectively communicating the risks and benefits of the surgery were paramount in alleviating his worries and establishing trust.

Being a good physician goes beyond medical expertise; it requires compassion and empathy to form meaningful connections with patients. These core communication skills are crucial in providing the best possible care. As a surgical resident, I make a conscious effort to embrace these principles, even amid the demands of a fast-paced environment. Prioritizing communication and teamwork not only improves patient care but also guards against burnout. By connecting genuinely with patients and fellow human beings, we foster a sense of fulfillment in our profession.

My encounter with the palliative patient served as a turning point in my medical journey. It instilled in me the value of compassionate communication and the profound impact it can have on patient care. As I continue to progress in my career, I remain committed to prioritizing connection and empathy, knowing that being a good doctor encompasses more than just technical skills. By embracing these principles, I hope to provide exceptional care to my patients while also finding personal satisfaction in forming genuine human connections.