

VISION OF THE PROFESSION IN A MEDICAL POINT OF VIEW

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Abstract: In this research paper profession, its definition, etymological meaning, elements of profession and its nature and ayurvedic medicine are described.

Keywords: Profession, Medicine.

What is a profession?

A person who works for pay or one who works out of love of the activity may not be called as a professional.^[1]

A profession is a field of work that has been successfully professionalized.^[2] It can be defined as a disciplined group of individuals, professionals, who adhere to ethical standards and who hold themselves out as, and are accepted by the public as possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognised body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level, and who are prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others.^{[3][4]}

Professional occupations are founded upon specialized educational training, the purpose of which is to supply disinterested objective counsel and service to others, for direct and definite compensation, wholly apart from expectation of other business gain.^[5] Medieval and early modern tradition recognized only three professions: divinity, medicine, and law,^{[6][7]} which were called the learned professions.^[8] In some legal definitions, a profession is not a trade^[9] nor an industry.^[10]

Some professions change slightly in status and power, but their prestige generally remains stable over time, even if the profession begins to have more required study and formal education.^[11] Disciplines formalized more recently, such as architecture, now have equally long periods of study associated with them.^[12]

Although professions may enjoy relatively high status and public prestige, not all professionals earn high salaries, and even within specific professions there exist significant differences in salary. In law, for example, a corporate defense lawyer working on an hourly basis may earn several times what a prosecutor or public defender earns.

Etymology

The term "profession" is a truncation of the term "liberal profession", which is, in turn, an Anglicization of the French term *profession libérale*. Originally borrowed by English users in the 19th century, it has been re-borrowed by international users from the late 20th, though the (upper-middle) class overtones of the term do not seem to survive re-translation: "liberal professions" are, according to the European Union's Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications (2005/36/EC), "those practised on the basis of relevant professional qualifications in a personal, responsible and professionally independent capacity by those providing intellectual and conceptual services in the interest of the client and the public". Under the European Commission, liberal professions are professions that require specialized training and that are regulated by "national governments or professional bodies".^[13]

What are the elements of profession?

1. The dedication of a person to a particular way of life.¹⁴
2. The activities of a person that involve important occupations which are necessary for the proper functioning of society.¹⁵
3. The activity that puts service to society ahead of or at least equal to personal gain.¹⁶

In addition, every profession is supposed to have its own code of ethics and enforce those ethical rules for all its members. Without fulfilling all these requirements, perhaps, there are no professions.¹⁷

The nature of professional ethics:

Professional ethics is a type of applied ethics.¹⁸ There are different views about the nature of professional ethics.

1. First, set of rules might be called professional ethics because the members of a particular profession articulate it.
2. Secondly, it is concerned with the ethical conduct of the profession.

The first type of professional ethics is found in codes of ethics promulgated by the professional group.¹⁹ The claim that professionals only know enough to judge the ethics of their group disregards the fact that their clients or patients and society as a whole are affected. Infact, the society as well as the clients is also part of the role of ethics that forms a particular profession and they have a decisive role in deciding.²⁰ What a particular profession is allowed to do or not allowed in doing. Hence the society and the clients have a right to participate in formulating and imposing the professional ethics.

In professional ethics the role definition of a person is crucial. It determines what duties are specific to the members of the profession and which rights will be granted to them by society.

Every profession has specific obligations that depend on what is approved as the purpose of the profession within the culture.

For example, a profession like law is set up and approved for the promotion of justice according to the constitution and laws of a specific society.²²

Thus, the lawyer has a duty to represent the interests of his clients in order to ensure a fair trial even though that might result in some perpetrators of crimes going free.²³

Medical profession:

Medical profession and the persons working in this area are known as medical professionals, like any other profession, medical profession has its own code of conduct to its members and the persons working in this profession are governed by those ethical norms and values peculiar to their profession.²⁴

Membership in a profession brings with it obligations specific to that profession or the roles they play in that profession.²⁵ The roles assigned to medical professionals change from society and the goals and aspirations of the profession. For example, the Hippocratic tradition paternalistically saw the physician in charge of everything.²⁶ In recent times, under the influence of the Western liberal political tradition, changes occurred in health care system resulting in the recognition of patient's rights and societal obligations.²⁷ For medical professionals, the primary ethical consideration is protecting of the dignity of the human persons.²⁸

The code of conduct for medical practitioners, indeed, is as old as the medical profession itself.²⁹ In all ages of history and in all forms of societies, medical profession has been governed by certain ethical norms and values that the society holds, and it is mandatory on the part of every practicing member to follow those norms and values that the society prescribes to them.

Ayurvedic Medicine and its Code of Conduct to the Members:

Ayurvedic medicine is the ancient Indian system of medicine and it is still practiced by many people throughout India.³⁰ This system of medicine has been systematized around 800B.C Charaka and Susruta were the founders of classical Indian medicine and they contribute two works on ayurvedic medicine known as 'Chararka Samhita' and 'Susruta Samhita' Charaka Samhita contains a lengthy Code of ethics, which is obligatory to all medical practitioners.³¹ The following are some excerpts from the Code of ethics stated in Charaka Samhita:

Day and night, however you may be engaged, you shall strive for the relief of the patient with all your heart and soul.³² You shall not desert or injure your patient even for the sake of your life or your living.

You shall be modest in your dress and appearance and speak words that are gentle, pure, righteous, pleasing, worthy, true, wholesome, and moderate.

Even knowing that the patients span of life has come to its close, it shall not be mentioned by you if, when done, it would cause shock to the patient or to others.

Women who are unattended by their husbands or guardians shall not receive treatment. No offering of a present by a woman without the knowledge, you should not boast very much about it. Most people are offended by the boastfulness of even those who are otherwise good and knowledgeable.

Charaka Samhita warns that one may survive the fall of a thunderbolt on one's head but one cannot expect to escape the fatal effects of medicine prescribed by an ignorant physician. Susruta Samhita describes about the dissection of the human body by classical Indian surgeons. The deep – seated Indian taboo on contact with dead matter could not prevent the surgeons to dissect a dead body.

The Code of conduct framed by Medical Council of India:

The Medical Council of India, in the year 1956, framed a Code of Conduct for physicians, which is mandatory to all the practicing doctors in India. The declaration of Indian Code of Medical Ethics is as follows:

1. I solemnly pledge myself to consecrate my life to the service of humanity.
2. Even under threat, I will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity.
3. I will maintain the utmost respect for human life from the time of conception.
4. I will not permit considerations of religion, nationality, race, party politics, or social standing to intervene between my duty and my patient.
5. I will practice my profession with conscience and dignity.
6. The health of my patient will be my first consideration.
7. I will respect the secrets that are confided in me.
8. I will give to my teachers the respect and gratitude which is their due.
9. I will maintain by all means in my power the honor and noble traditions of the medical profession.
10. My colleagues will be my brothers.

In addition to this Declaration, the Indian Medical Council laid down some general principles to guide physicians in their practice.

The prime object of the medical profession is to render service to humanity; reward or financial gain is a subordinate consideration.

Physicians as good citizens and possessed of special training, should advise concerning the health of the community in which they dwell.

The physician should practice methods of healing founded on a scientific basis and should not associate professionally with anyone who violates this principle. Solicitation of parents or entering into a contract with the patients “no cure, no payment” is unethical.

The medical Council of India is empowered to take disciplinary action against offending physicians. This may amount to removal of the physician for a specified period or altogether from the register of the Medical council so that he or she cannot engage in medical practice.

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