

## Emotional Intelligence at workplace in hospitals: Is it time to rejuvenate?

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**T**he primary aim of any hospital is to provide proper care to the patients. Giving them a top priority and approaching with respect, kindness and empathy will enable them to be handled with comfort and safety. But somehow this is gradually decaying in medical practice.

Working in a hospital, we deal not only with patients but also with patients' relatives, nursing staffs, colleagues, administrators and hospital staffs. During the course of discharging our duties sincerely and with responsibilities, there may be mistakes or conflicts and sometimes there may be reward or punishment. You may not be able to satisfy all of them but this should not deter one for doing good and respecting others' feeling with empathy. But how often do we put this into practice?

Is there anything behind playing a role for this?

Working with people means working with human emotions. Failure to understand the feeling of a colleague may lead the chief to say, "You are frustrated and upset, but I do not care. You are supposed to work and it's not my concern to make you happy. Either you quit the job or work to the expectations. I can hardly help you." This is a common example of a boss being too mechanical in his thoughts. Frustration invites more of it unless one acquires the knowledge of empathy. For the development of institute one must work collectively giving opportunities, and sharing equally all the good chances with the colleagues by nurturing relationships.

Another scenario that we may come across in a hospital these days is: a patient is in agony of suffering and a group of medical students are busy exchanging text messages in their mobile phones. We have become so apathetic these days that the doctors, nursing staffs and trainees are least affected by patients' interests. We often do not care what their attitude will be towards us later on.

Nowadays most of the doctors make a diagnosis without touching their patients. The time spent by a doctor

with the patients is not only becoming less, but also without mindfulness. Inadequate staffing, exhaustion and occupational stress may lead to irritation to queries when asked more than once during daily rounds or at outpatient departments. Patients do have alternatives and right to select their own doctors and hospitals for their treatment. They prefer the doctor who is approachable and does not hesitate to answer their basic queries. So it is necessary to have compassion, empathy, patience and understanding in dealing with patients or relatives. In fact the unarticulated behavioural conflict between doctors and patients has connection with hospital's fame and ultimately its income generation<sup>1</sup>.

We were not taught, or we tend not to remember what we have been taught in medical college, to value and respect human feelings.

It is very important to be able to read others' emotions to be successful in managing emotions in acceptable ways for productive outcome. This will prevent us from being recognized as surprised or idiosyncratic in behaviour. Being emotionally intelligent at workplaces is as equally important as acquiring technical skills.

Doctors can note down the joy, sadness, regret and anger in their daily practice and be aware of these emotions. Understanding the emotion helps them to manage it in a way that will empower personal as well as professional growth.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) at workplace is defined as the ability to identify, use, understand, and manage emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges and defuse conflict<sup>2</sup>.

Emotionally intelligent health professionals know their emotions and limitations or weaknesses. This makes them confident not to get out of control and become too angry, jealous or partial while taking decisions. They always remain motivated despite the stress to inspire

others and become a successful architect of team work. People with high index of emotional intelligence are good at recognizing the feelings of their own and others. When it comes to empathy in clinical practice, this is one of the most important factors in EI.

Empathy enables one to recognize the feeling of others and manage relationships. EI confers social skills to take responsibility for one's action in more dignified way. This teaches us to value human feelings, prepare one to apologize when needed.

Error is inevitable and may occur anytime, anywhere and by anybody. It must be identified and then managed intelligently to improve safety in clinical practice. It is very essential to give feedback to colleagues to make them more aware of bizarre behaviour. Behaviour of a person is tightly associated with his/her morale and performance in clinical works.

Employees whether clinicians or administrators, with high EI are valuable assets of a hospital. They are capable of handling the difficult situations smartly to nullify or minimize damage and protect professional relations.

Being human being, a doctor cannot always drop or forget the personal problems right at the entrance of his working place. Here comes an immense issue of brilliant management of emotions at workplace to work smarter if not harder.

Financial institutions and corporate offices have begun seeking magnitude of EI in their employee right from

their selection at their interviews. Company production has close association with the EI of its workers<sup>3</sup>. Health institutions cannot, thus, remain exception in this regard.

In the workplace it is believed that performance relies more than ever on interpersonal relationships, tolerance, adaptability and teamwork, and it has been proposed that EI constitutes the building blocks to these important interpersonal workplace behaviours<sup>4,5</sup>.

Every coin has its other side. Not only does this have to be viewed from service provider's aspect. Equally important are the consumers and their preparedness towards this issue. Every good work has a hope for the future and consumes time. We may not change others unless we do first.

Is it possible to acquire and develop EI for professionals working at hospitals? EI can be learnt and taught through continuous education and institutional motivation<sup>2,6,7</sup>.

This has been an integral part of medical education in many different academic institutions both for health professionals and administrators<sup>8</sup>.

Medical educationists should seek every possibility to incorporate the course of EI in national curriculum. Moreover hospital administrators should encourage its staffs to get trained on EI which has been an indispensable facet of career.

This will definitely add both charm and the beauty in the profession and also raise the image of the institute.

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