

## PATIENT'S RIGHTS

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### INTRODUCTION

Gone are the days when a treating doctor was treated as next to god! The education and literacy is rising day by day and so is the awareness among people of every walk of life. Human rights propagated by the United Nations is already in existence. Our children, students and people of the world today are conscious of their rights. Thus patients also are aware of their rights. This is a healthy modern trend for the medical world today.

- In the modern world of buyer-seller system, every consumer has a right and at one time or the other, we all are consumers. A consumer means either buying goods or availing the services. As education is rising, the awareness about right is also increasing.
- The word meaning of right is morally good, justified or acceptable. It also means factually correct and most appropriate.
- In the consumer protection act, the consumers interest is supreme, as litigant's interest is supreme in an honourable court of law. In a patient dealing by a doctor, or the hospital, the "Patient's interest is supreme".
- The medical world is governed by law as well as professional morals and ethics also. Information to be given to the patients as their right are as under:-
  1. Nature of the illness including the likely outcome. In another words, the prognosis.
  2. About the investigations.
  3. Brief information about the procedures and surgical interventions.
  4. Expected benefits out of surgery.
  5. Side effects and involved risk factors of the surgery.
  6. The therapeutic outcomes after the treatment.
  7. Appropriate time involved in recovery. This is important to apply for leave if the patient is working in a job.
  8. The approximate cost factors because the patient has to arrange money may be by taking advance from the employer.
  9. The seriousness of the patient's condition so as to plan the fatal outcome and inform the near and dear accordingly.
  10. The patient and/or the near relatives including the spouse has got a right to ask questions regarding the illness. The treating doctor should encourage the patient to ask questions.

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- The patient may ask the following three main questions:-  
Doctor!  
1) Can you provide best treatment?  
2) Can you guarantee cure?  
3) Can you stop death?

Answers for all the above 3 questions are no. The word best is a comparative and the scope of better is always at higher centers. The guarantee of cure cannot be given, as medicines response varies from patient to patient with so many scientific reasons.

Death cannot be stopped as nobody knows the absolute truth and medical science is also changing very fast with newer research across the world.

Allow spouse/blood relatives to see/meet the patient, when the doctor thinks that patient is going to die soon. This is a great emotional event and the hospital rules have to be relaxed for such situations on humanitarian grounds.

- Along with the patient's right, a patient has certain duties also which are as under:-  
  
1) The patient must disclose all informations to the treating doctor.  
2) He must co-operate for relevant examinations, procedures and investigations.  
3) The patient must carry out all the instructions as regards drugs, food, rest and exercise (physiotherapy) etc.  
4) He/She must tell about any allergy with some drug (if known).  
5) The patient must compensate with money to the private doctor. The skill has to be valued although it is difficult to evaluate the skill in terms of money.

- As per human rights, one cannot even touch another person without his/her consent. In the medical profession also, consent is an absolute pre-requisite for patient's examination or some procedure including surgery.

Consent is an essential medico-legal requirement. The term consent means voluntary agreement, compliance or permission. One of the most basic of human rights is freedom from physical interference.

The consent can be implied as happens in O.P.D. It can be express which includes either oral or written for a specific procedure. Informed consent is in writing and distinct in a format which includes diagnosis, nature of treatment, risks involved with prospects of success, prognosis and alternative method of every risk.

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