Chapter 1
Medicine Residency Training

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how issues with medicine and health care are pervasive all over the globe— to a lesser or greater extent. The twin contexts of the quality of and access to health care and medical services are entangled in the deeper complexities of the way the health care machinery works. Problems with governance, political instability and unrest, environmental factors and legal dilemmas add to the already chaotic nature of health care establishments, where patients and doctors find themselves surrounded and directed by technology most of the time. The doctor-patient relationship suffers due to multiple factors ranging from a ‘lack of satisfaction’ from the medical consultation to issues of affordability and funding.

KEY POINTS

• to determine whether the existing health care system and its services are optimum for the populations it caters to
• to examine the various components of the health care system and the role played by each component
• to detect deficiencies in the health care system or services and to which component it is related
• to determine if any reforms are required and how to bring them about in a systematic manner
• to study the different mechanisms of providing health and medical services to the population
• to understand the role of society and government towards health and its infrastructure
• to appreciate how private sector health care leads to extreme marginalization in society
• to understand the benefits of insurance
• to seek an optimum system of good quality care and access to health for all sections of society
• to establish clear and feasible options for both the provision of medical services as well as the education and training of medical professionals

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INTRODUCTION

Health is life. It has gone from being one of the prerequisites of meaningful living to being the primary pre-occupation of all. The strength of a nation is a clear reflection of the health of its communities—these communities naturally would be made up of healthy men, women and children.

While the affluent population is always looking out to improve their health quotient, the ones that are not so affluent struggle to stay alive and in fairly good health. In modern times, money and status are not enough to ensure good nutrition and thereby good health. On the one hand, lifestyle diseases affect the rich and the poor in a similar manner. Thus everyone generally attempts not to fall sick and succumb to the threat of lifestyle disorders. On the other hand, the poor and the marginalized carry an added burden to survive common but largely avoidable health problems. Most of these problems could be attributed to poor nutrition and sanitation.

But doctors, in much of the world, are either deified or demonised, depending on place, time, circumstance and culture. They hold the key to life so to speak, often compromise with their life, and sometimes even put their own life at stake. There is the magical touch and the miracle cure. There are also the deeply buried secrets that sometimes consume doctors and compel them to take their own life. These are the skeletons in the cupboard that topple out with a medical scandal or shocking news. And then there are the incredibly brave and heroic acts which go down in history as medical milestones. All of these speak of the immense aura and attraction of medicine as a career and calling for many a starry eyed youth.

The sector dealing with medical education and residency training is no less fascinating. Not much, in fact no composite or systematic writing has been published about the exact method by which doctors are produced, in what way their training takes place, what their trials and tribulations may be, and how these can be minimized and their training optimized. This book is not only an intellectual undertaking but also expects to meet the important aspect of understanding, and thereby trying to improve, the system of medical training. This book therefore takes a global perspective of the medical profession and is relevant to medical educators and practitioners, and also consumers of health related services everywhere. Certain peculiarities of individual countries and regions have been discussed briefly throughout this book.

The Health Care Industry

Is medicine an arcane science, a subtle art, a noble profession or a lucrative business?

It is, of course, each one of these and also the sum.

Medicine as a profession has some unique qualities that are not associated with other professions. First of all it is a science, probably the highest of its kind and with numerous dimensions. The specific subjects one needs to master are unparalleled in the careers related to science, and are increasing by the day thanks to massive and tectonic shifts in the nature of the medical and health care profession. Being a science, it has numerous technical areas that need to be examined in depth and require long years of study to achieve mastery. Again, being a science, it is precise in its scope and meaning and can be appreciated as a substantive entity. It is a science that defines the artistry of creation and the beauty of the human being (Leopold, 2014).

Thus medicine has as much to do with art as with science. It studies the structure of the human body in order to heal its soul. Medical treatment does not just cure disease--it makes a patient better, and therein is found the secret of the success of medicine to touch and transform lives. Doctors are accorded much respect and status in society for their ability to heal. It is important to understand the true mean-