Chapter 8
Management Skills and Leadership

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to explore why juggling all the different and demanding roles of a medical professional is by no means an easy task. Perhaps the biggest challenge for doctors is time management and multitasking. Much of this is part and parcel of an ordinary doctor’s life, but due to the peculiar nature and complex paradigms of modern health care services, special emphasis must be put on empowering fledgling medical professionals with such managerial skills. Resident medical physicians and surgeons should at least be aware of the countless opportunities available as well as how to get the best out of them.

KEY POINTS

- To discuss the miscellaneous areas not covered in the previous chapters
- To appreciate the role of leadership in the health care sector
- To explore how these leadership skills could be developed optimally
- To understand ways and means of being an entrepreneur in medicine and health care
- To understand the multiple dimensions of being a health care practitioner
- To appreciate the fascinating and diverse settings in which doctors provide medical and health care services
- To learn about the other talents that doctors put into use in order to etch a permanent place in history
- To see how the practice of medicine has been affected by the evils of corruption
- To address the problem of corruption and try to eliminate it from the health care profession

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INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of professional medical education in the undergraduate course to the period of medical residency, intermingling of the various batches of students as well as interaction with resident doctors occur at the time of the clinical sessions. This helps to build not only camaraderie but also condition and educate newcomers on the nuances of clinical services from communication to care. As much of clinical medicine is an experiential process, learning on the job, closely observing resident doctors and senior staff or faculty, and understanding the methods of clinical decision making facilitate the translation of textbook knowledge into practical wisdom. The idea of ethical and evidence based practice, as also the concept and practice of professionalism, is best understood this way.

Doctors must operate within large social, cultural and economic boundaries, and with the shift in health care philosophy from a biomedical model to a patient-centered model doctors are required to harness huge resources of manpower. A mutualistic approach to patient care, as in an ideal situation, means that diverse sets of people share the same space as the doctor and the patient. Central to all this is of course the doctor-patient relationship.

The Multiple Dimensions of the Medical Profession

The current era of medicine is rife with challenges as well as opportunities, as illustrated by the figure above. A medical professional should be cognisant of all these and confident about turning a challenge into an opportunity. This could only be derived from effective time management and the ability to multitask. Thus, one of the essential roles a doctor must play in the modern health care setting is that of a manager, as mentioned in the earlier chapters and in various contexts. Surprisingly, the teaching of managerial skills and imparting training in the same is lacking in most medical school curricula. It is usually during residency that such skills and competencies are imbibed by way of everyday experiences, a sort of hands-on training. This could, in theory, work very well, but it is easy to see how disparate, not to mention difficult, and woefully inadequate such a sort of exposure would be. A lot would depend on the hospital or health care setting for that particular resident, and his or her own emotional maturity and confidence.