The Surgeon: Leader and a Team Man

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Life as a surgeon is both rewarding and testing, especially that of a leader heading an organization like Association of Surgeons of India (ASI). Wearing multiple hats, keeping different balls in the air, and motivating his team to do the same are indeed challenges. Being strong, but not rude; being kind, yet not weak; taking hold, yet not being a bully; being thoughtful, yet not being lazy; being humble, yet not timid; being proud, yet not arrogant; having humor, yet without folly, is what one has to work to achieve. Like what is believed...

Every test in our life makes us bitter or better
Every problem comes to make us or break us
The choice is ours whether we become Victims or Victorious.

Real leaders make themselves accessible and available. It is nothing but their true concern which lies in their demand for high standards. The field of surgery greatly depends on detailed knowledge of the subject, technology, demand, and competitors. A twenty-first century modern surgeon is constantly upgrading his knowledge and skills, utters no loose comments about fellow surgeons, chooses his patients wisely, is learned enough to acknowledge when not to operate, and most importantly knows his limits. Surgery is about discipline, commitment, and meticulousness and a modern surgeon must abide by such definitions.

Formal Training

The making of a surgeon involves vigorous training and what many may not understand is that surgeons are “no regular people.” It takes years to develop; essential skills are acquired step by step. The mentors are not sadists but realists given the years of experience and hardships faced by them. Premature

adoption of complicated surgical advancements or any other surgical technique without proper training and supervised practice, which reflects both lack of knowledge and hands-on skills, is highly unfair to our patients and to the profession at large. One has to respect the learning curve, which is used interchangeably with the term “proficiency curve.”

Sharpening of the Saw: the Way Forward

Every surgeon is an asset to the community. The demand for a competent and well-trained surgeon has never been an issue but the demand is going to rise in the near future. All individuals would be expected to contribute; therefore, it becomes imperative for a leader to find solutions. The key is to train oneself and also the fellow colleagues real hard in order to contribute to the welfare of our patients and society at large. These programs can happen as workshops, continued medical education, and skill courses. We in India still have a long way to go in implementing this pedagogic model for surgeons in practice but “Even Rome was not built in a day.”

“Swachh” (Clean) Clinical Practice

Surgical errors nowadays are much more frequent than ever before. The news media is overflowing with news of wrong site or side operations or medication errors almost every other third day. Post-operative complications statistics is on the rise. We must condemn unhealthy clinical practices. Reboot the entire surgical practice on a cleaner slate. Enrich our professional life with a safer, community friendly, conscientious practice. Professional development must be done through education and awareness of all stakeholders. As a leader, one has to overcome the challenges by encouraging teamwork, explaining the importance of proper patient selection, a well-guided system of formal training inclusive of practical skills training in workshops, CMEs, Regional Refresher Courses, enrollment of young surgeons in training programs, etc.

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The General Surgeon Today: How Do We Retool Safely?

The domain of a general surgeon is eroded by numerous specialties. What is the role of a general surgeon today? How many do we need for our country? Is it an extended undergraduate training? Today, a general surgeon is willing to join any subspecialty that is available. Does he has a choice? Is it safe to pass the knife to the unsafe hands? These are some of the many questions that need to be addressed. We need to impart new, potentially transformative skills to a general surgeon. There is a need to have accredited educational institutes. The challenges of a surgical career need to be looked at by the leadership of large surgical organizations. Ethics, safe surgical practices, and back to basics should be the foremost key areas in modern surgical practice. Gaps in our professional practices need to be identified and carefully plugged before it is too late.

Safety of Surgeons in the Present-Day Indian Scenario

The consistent introduction and upgrade of newer technologies, inadequate and suboptimal/misleading knowledge available on the internet, inadequate infrastructure, escalating costs of treatment, extreme commercialization of medical education, deficient and incompetent staff, untrained paramedics, advent of consumer forums and courts, and increased number of violent attacks on working junior doctors have left us all remorseful and outraged. Will science capture medicine at a future date and would the physician surrender to the awesome power of science and technology? Or will medical practice in India become so increasingly cold, uncaring, and inhuman that the physicians will give up courage and compassion to combat any disease they come face to face with in the OPDs? Or will a doctor ever feel embraced to hold the hand of a dying man? There are many similar questions seeking an answer.

Reflection of a Surgeon's Personal Life

Surgeons today are busy chasing life's big pleasures, missing out on the little ones. Their days are overscheduled, mind is overworked, and spirits are underfed. They have started valuing human beings not by the size of the heart or strength of character but rather by the size of the wallet. We want to be filthy rich, famous, admired, and praised every time but above all we live to be "wanted." The world which we have started to build around ourselves is making us hollow within. Adding value to the world should be the prime aim. Success is nothing but an inevitable by-product of life spent enriching the lives of other people, so living truly before one dies should be the motto. The surgeon–patient bond is a gift of trust and it is priceless. Surgery is a major life moment for each patient. Our choice of becoming a surgical servant is the noblest calling.

Gender Gaps

Our profession should be equally attractive to both men and women. Surgical disciplines have not by far attracted women in sufficient numbers despite so much being spoken about gender equality nationwide and globally. The differences in marital status, child-bearing age, partner's employment, and other factors have for so many years made women hesitant about joining this stream of medical field and reach great heights. Women surgeons are still compensated 10–17% less and are less likely to rise to leadership roles. They are still a minority in this field. Our profession must commit to forging meaningful maternity and child care policies and practices enabling women empowerment in this modern era.

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