

PP 24 - Patient perceptions of “kindness” in doctors

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Introduction: Research has shown the benefit of compassion in improving health outcomes and patient satisfaction. Kindness is a closely related concept that is often referred to in Sri Lanka. However, the literature lacks clarity regarding the definition and attributes of the construct of “kindness” in relation to medical practice. This study, which aimed to examine the perceptions of patients about “kindness” of doctors, is part of a larger project aiming to develop a culturally valid scale to assess kindness exhibited by Sri Lankan healthcare workers in their professional practice.

Methods: A qualitative research design was employed. Semi-structured interviews were carried out on consenting in-patients at the NHSL by research assistants among in-ward and clinic patients of the National Hospital, Sri Lanka and the De Soysa Maternity Hospital, Sri Lanka until data saturation was reached. The interview explored the characteristics of a *good doctor*, the importance of kindness as a characteristic of a good doctor and the reasons for this and the characteristics and behaviours that define a kind doctor. Interviews were conducted for approximately 20 minutes. All interviews were transcribed and the codes, subthemes and themes that emerged in relation to the interview questions were identified.

Results: A total of 44 Sinhala-language semi-structured interviews were conducted. The data is currently being analysed and will be presented. Preliminary analysis indicates that patients identify both kindness and kind speech, provision of necessary attention, doing appropriate investigations and promptness in treatment as important characteristics of a good doctor.

Conclusion: The preliminary findings indicate that the portrayal of “kindness” is perceived as an important characteristic of a *good doctor*. The study findings will help in identifying the specific characteristics and behaviours perceived to be indicative of a “kind” doctor by patients and guide the development of personal and professional skills training programmes to develop these attributes within doctors.

Keywords: Kindness, kind doctor, good doctor

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