

## Counselling: An issue that needs emphasis

Syed Askari Hasan,<sup>1</sup> Aisha Zia,<sup>2</sup> Mehwish Zehra<sup>3</sup>

Madam, I want to bring up a very important issue that I witnessed during three months of US clinical experience. Counselling has a role equivalent to therapies in treatment and more importantly in the adherence of the treatment prescribed by the practitioner to the patient. It helps to build up rapport between a physician and the patient, and makes a patient understand that the doctor is viewing him as a whole entity and not just with reference to the disease. Working in both Pakistani and American setup made me realise the important difference does not often lie in the diagnostic workup or the treatments prescribed but in the counselling of the patient. An important point that doctors in our government setup might bring up is the patient load, which needs to be acknowledged<sup>1</sup> but this is something that is present in the American setup as well<sup>2</sup> and should not undermine the importance of counselling which has two- tier advantage as discussed earlier.

Several studies have shown positive reinforcement of the effect of counselling on outcomes. A study shows that if pregnant women were accurately counselled about the normal pregnancy weight gain then majority showed adherence and good outcome.<sup>3</sup> Similarly counselling patients about their lifestyle such as smoking, alcohol consumption, safe sex and exercise is a common practice which may lack in our setup. This leaves a remarkable

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<sup>1,2</sup>MBBS, DOW Medical College, <sup>3</sup>3rd Year, MBBS, Karachi Medical and Dental College, Karachi Pakistan.

**Correspondence:** Syed Askari Hasan. Email: syedaskarih@gmail.com

impact on the patients' psychology and makes them more inclined to follow the guidelines given by the practitioner religiously. Proper counselling can also decrease the stress and anxiety level of patients as shown by a study in which cancer patients receiving proper counselling were at ease throughout the course of their therapy.<sup>4</sup> Researchers have built models for clinical trials in which counselling has been given immense importance especially for cancer patients.<sup>5</sup>

It cannot not be emphasised enough that proper time given to counselling is beneficial to patients in every regard and also gives a sense of satisfaction to the practitioner as it is shown to have better outcomes. Therefore counselling should be an essential part of training to undergraduates and should be implemented by all practitioners with its full essence.

### References

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