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Method of Therapy in Islamic Medicine

The patients were treated through a scheme starting with physiotherapy and diet; if this failed, drugs were used, and at last, surgery would be resorted to. The physiotherapy included exercises and water baths. The Arabs had an elaborate system of dieting and were aware of food deficiencies. Proper nutrition was an important item of treatment.

Drugs were divided into two groups: simple and compound drugs. They were aware of the interaction between drugs; thus, they used simple drugs first. If these failed, compound drugs were used which are made from two or more compounds. If these conservative measures failed, surgery was undertaken.

Medical Ethics In Islam

The medical profession was a well-respected specialty and its leaders kept it this way by laying down proper ethics. Al- Tabari, the chief physician in 970 A.D., described the Islamic code of ethics as follows (Hamamch 1971, Levy 1967):

1. Personal Characters Of The Physician

The Physician ought to be modest, virtuous, merciful, and un-addicted to liquor. He should wear clean clothes, be dignified, and have well- groomed hair and beard. He should not join the ungodly and scoffers, nor sit at their table. He should select his company to be persons of good reputation. He should be careful of what he says and should not hesitate to ask forgiveness if he has made an error. He should be forgiving and never seek revenge. He should be friendly and peacemaker. He should not make jokes or laugh at the improper time or place.

2. His Obligation Towards Patients

He should avoid predicting whether a patient will live or die, only God (Allah) knows. He ought not lose his temper when his patient keeps asking questions but should answer gently and compassionately. He should treat alike the rich and the poor, the master and the servant, the powerful and the powerless, the

elite and the illiterate. God will reward him if he helps the needy. The physician should not be late for his rounds or his house calls. He should be punctual and reliable.

He should not wrangle about his fees. If the patient is very ill or in an emergency, he should be thankful, no matter how much he is paid. He should not give drugs to a pregnant woman for an abortion unless necessary for the mother's health. If the physician prescribes a drug orally, he should make sure that the patient understands the name correctly, in case he would ask for the wrong drug and get worse instead of better. He should be decent towards women and should not divulge the secrets of his patients.

3. His Obligation Towards The Community

The physician should speak no evil of reputable men of the community or be critical of any one's religious belief.

4. His Obligations Towards His Colleagues

The physician should speak well of his acquaintances and colleagues. He should not honor himself by shaming others. If another physician has been called to treat his patient, the family doctor should not criticize his colleague even if the diagnosis and the recommendations of the latter differ from his own. However, be has the obligation to explain what each point of view may lead to since his duty is to counsel the patient as best as he can. He must warn him that combining different types of therapy may be dangerous because the actions of different drugs may be incompatible and injurious.

5. His Obligations Towards His Assistants

If his subordinate does wrong, the physician should not rebuke him in front of others, but privately and cordially.

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