



Is it Business or Service?



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Opinion

I retired from General Practice 9 years ago after serving the local community for three decades. A couple of years before my planned retirement, the then FHSA arranged for our practice to move into a large Health Centre which was shared by another practice. It is a large spacious place with four or five consulting rooms (ours is a group practice) and a separate room for the midwife, nurse and a counsellor, and a treatment room, etc. As seen in newly planned Health Centres. There was a room for a Practice Manager. All the rooms were properly signposted, and so was the Practice Manager's. We all worked in those modern practices with delight and the comfort of the patients.

A week ago, I visited my old surgery and to recall the old times, I went from room to room where I was allowed. When passing the Practice Manager's room, I was taken back to see that the sign for Practice Manager was replaced by another sign which says "Business Manager". I couldn't believe what I was seeing. So the medical care has become a business. When I inquired, I was told by the staff it has to run like a business. I rushed to the Medical Library of the local District Hospital, and consulted the latest edition of the Oxford Textbook of Medicine -if there is a recommendation of how much a Doctor is eligible to charge or claim money for treating a case of pneumonia, or a childhood URTI, or for any disease, I could not find anywhere. All the medical

books say signs, symptoms, management of a particular disease, no mention of Financial Aspects. I even saw the old edition of "Price Textbook of Medicine" to see if there was a recommendation which I may have overlooked when I was actively in Practice.

No recommendations. Then I consulted the world famous Bailey & Love Textbook of Surgery to see if there is a mention of how much a surgeon is entitled, or should be asking about repairing a Hernia, or treating Varicose Veins. Regretfully, no. Even the obstetrics book by well known Ten Teachers do not recommend how much a doctor should charge for his mere presence in the Labour room, where normal Labour is going on which is conducted by a midwife. I looked and looked everywhere and was unable to find an answer to my question. I am puzzled. The knowledge which we gained at the medical school in the process of becoming a doctor does not mention anywhere what are the monetary aspects of treating a patient.

So I asked myself how comes it becomes a business, which we have not been taught or learnt. Where has the service aspect of caring for the patient gone? Is this "service" aspect totally eclipsed by business? I am glad I am retired from the business aspect. I have served my community with full attention and dedication without even thinking of its business aspect. I wonder that on this development Hippocrates will be very uncomfortable in the grave.



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