



Medical Ethics in Everyday Practice: A Growing Need for Young Physicians

Medical ethics remains the foundation of medical practice; yet, in Bangladesh, it has often received less attention in training and practice than it deserves. For young physicians, beginning their careers, it involves not only applying medical knowledge but also navigating situations that demand ethical judgment, such as obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, disclosing errors, and ensuring fairness in treatment.

Recent studies in Bangladesh have shown that medical students and young graduates frequently struggle with ethical knowledge and application. A multicentre study reported that while most final-year students recognised the importance of ethics, their actual knowledge was unsatisfactory, and their attitudes toward practical dilemmas were inconsistent.¹ Another study found significant gaps in students' attitudes toward honesty and confidentiality, two essential elements of professionalism.² These findings suggest that ethical principles are acknowledged in theory but often underdeveloped in practice.

Recently, the Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council has outlined codes of conduct and incorporated ethics more explicitly into the MBBS curriculum; however, implementation has remained uneven.³ In many teaching hospitals, the "hidden curriculum", the lessons learned informally from senior physicians and institutional culture, has a stronger influence on behaviour than formal classroom sessions.⁴ This gap between what is taught and what is practised can leave young physicians unprepared to deal with real-life ethical challenges.

Ethical practice is not abstract. It shapes patient trust, strengthens the doctor-patient relationship, and reduces the potential for conflict. In a healthcare environment where patients are often vulnerable and resources are limited, even small lapses in ethics can have serious consequences. Evidence from South Asia shows that issues such as informed consent continue to be shaped by cultural and systemic constraints, underscoring the need for greater sensitivity and training.⁵

The way forward requires integrating ethics into every stage of medical education and ensuring it is reinforced in clinical settings. Structured teaching, reflection sessions such as small-group discussions, case-based ethics learning or mentored debriefings after difficult cases, open discussions of dilemmas, and strong role models among faculty are vital. Journals also have a responsibility to actively promote ethical discourse by publishing research, case narratives, and ethics-focused commentaries that bring attention to real-world dilemmas, encourage professional self-examination, and help build a culture of accountability and ethical awareness across the medical community.

By prioritising ethics in everyday medical care, we can nurture a generation of physicians who not only treat illness but also uphold trust, respect, humanity, and values at the core of medicine. This requires leadership from institutions, accountability within the profession, and sustained commitment from educators. Young physicians must be supported in developing moral courage alongside clinical competence, so that ethical practice becomes a habit rather than a burden. Creating safe spaces for dialogue and reflection can further help transform ethical ideals into daily professional behaviour.

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