Principles of Family Practice

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Who is a family physician?

• The one who takes care of basic health of the family
• Who could be this person?
Changing profile of Family Physicians in India

Ripple effect – from experts to practitioners
Currently available resources

From tradition - expertise - quackery - ?
Global Origin of Family Practice

- Following World War II (1939 to 1945):
  - Medical specialties and subspecialties increased in popularity, having an adverse effect on the number of physicians in general practice.
  - General practitioners were concerned that four years of medical school plus a one-year internship was no longer adequate preparation for handling health care in community.
- A residency program was added to their training to give them additional training, knowledge, and prestige.
- In 1969, family medicine (then known as family practice) was recognized as a distinct specialty in the U.S.
Scenario in India

• Earlier concept of a **Family Doctor** to whom families visited regularly irrespective of his/her specialisation
• Home visit by the ‘doctor’
• The doctors give primary care treatment and refer to a specialist for further care if need be – ?? First Aid
• New Concept of **Family Health**: People expect a well trained Consultant to make a diagnosis at community level and also provide quality health care
What is Family Health?

• Health for ALL: “Attainment of a level of health that will enable every individual lead a socially and economically productive life”

• Levels of Health Care:
  - Primary health care
  - Secondary health care
  - Tertiary health care
Primary Health Care

• The closest to the people
• Essential health care made universally accessible to individuals and acceptable to them, through full participation and at a cost the community and country can afford
• The “first” level of contact between the individual and the health system
• A majority of prevailing health problems can be satisfactorily managed
• Provided by the primary health centers/ local practitioners
Family Medicine – Primary Health Care

• A medical specialty devoted to holistic health care

• A division of primary care that provides continuing and comprehensive health care for the individual and family across all ages, genders, diseases

• Based on knowledge of the patient in the context of the family and the community, emphasizing disease prevention and health promotion
Who is a Family Physician?

- The one who provides a comprehensive primary care
Family Medicine in India

• Family Medicine (FM) recognized as a medical specialty in late 1990s
• According to the National Health Policy - 2002, there is an acute shortage of specialists in family medicine
• As family physicians play very important role in providing affordable and universal health care to people, the Government of India & MCI is now promoting the practice of family medicine by introducing post graduate training programs
Primary Care Physician in India

• General practice and Family practice are not the same
• A medical graduate who has successfully completed MBBS is registered with Indian Medical Council or any state medical council is considered a General Practitioner
• A family physician, however, is a Primary Care Physician who has completed specialist training in the discipline of Family Medicine
• The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) supported a Post Graduate Diploma programme in Family Medicine (PGDFM), and is offering support to doctors working with public health institutions, especially from the high focus states of India. However, the scale has not been significant to impact change.
• The Medical Council of India requires three-year residency for family medicine specialty, leading to the award of MD or DNB in Family Medicine
Attributes of Primary Care Physician/Family Physician

• By virtue of proper training - a skilled clinician
• Demonstrates competence in the patient-centered clinical methods
• The Doctor-Patient Relationship is central to the Role of the Family Physician
• Practices Family Medicine - a Community-Based discipline
Principles of Family Practice

1. The Person, Not the Problem
2. The Patient's Context
3. The Preventive Attitude
4. Concern for the Population at Risk
5. Community Resources
6. Integrating Life and Work
7. Unique Experience
8. Subjective Aspects of Medicine
9. Resource Management
Principle (1): The Person, Not the Problem

- Committed to the person, rather than to a particular body of knowledge, group of diseases or special technique
- Commitment not limited by the type of health problem available for any health problem in a person of either sex and any age
- Commitment has no defined end point, not terminated by cure of an illness, or by the end of a course of treatment, or by the incurability of an illness
- In many cases the commitment is made while the person is healthy, before any problem has developed (promotive and preventive)
Principle (2): The Patient's Context

- Physician seeks to understand the context of illness (personal, family and social context)
- Why did the patient come?
- Why did the patient come at this time?
- What does the patient think is wrong?
- How does the illness fit with his life situation and stage of development?
Principle (3): The Preventive Attitude

• Every contact with the patient is an opportunity for prevention or health education

• Since the family physician, on the average, sees each of his patients about four times a year, this is a rich source of opportunities for practicing preventive medicine

• Some visits are intentionally for preventive purposes – prenatal and well-baby care
Principle (4): Concern for the Population at Risk

• Usually clinicians think in terms of single patient rather than population groups
• Family physicians have to think in terms of both
Principle (5): Community Resources

• Sees himself as part of a community-wide network of supportive and health care agencies

• Working within the confines of a hospital, it is all too easy for physicians to remain unaware of the resources available in the community outside the hospital
Principle (6). Integrating Life and Work

• The family physician shares the same habitat as his patients

• In family practice a student can learn what it is like for a physician to be a living presence in his or her community
Principle (7) : Unique Experience

- The family physician sees patients at the office, at home and in the hospital.
- In the course of a family practice, gains unique experience:
  - Learns how much background information about patient and family can be obtained from a home visit.
  - How many illnesses can be very satisfactorily diagnosed and managed at home, using very simple methods (overcome a feeling of insecurity when separated from the resources of the hospital).
  - Help in the decision making about admission to hospital and help to monitor recovery after discharge.
Principle (8) : Subjective Aspects of Medicine

• The family physician also attaches importance to the subjective aspects of medicine
• So far medicine has been dominated by a strictly objective approach to health problems. For family physicians, this has always had to be reconciled with a sensitivity to feelings and an insight into relationships
• This includes an awareness of self: the family physician understands that his own values, attitudes and feelings are important determinants of how he practices medicine
Principle (9) : Resource Management

• The family physician is a manager of resources
• As a generalist and first-contact physician, he has control of large resources
• He is able, within certain limits, to control admission to hospital, use of investigations, prescription of treatment and referral to specialists
SUM UP

- Family Medicine/Practice is growing specialty in medical education and practice
- It is far beyond being a ‘Family Doctor’
- General practice and Family practice are not the same
- Requires to qualify a specific training program with well defined learning objectives and curriculum
- Adds personal touch, socio-economic and cultural context to art and science of medicine
Thank You