

2.34 A Study of the Moral Issues in the Process of Prescribing Western Medicine in Sri Lanka.

WSS Gunasekara
Department of Philosophy, University of Kelaniya.

ABSTRACT

Ethics refers to a series of moral principles. The main aim of this paper is to discuss ethics in relations to the medical profession. Medical ethics has become a controversial and much debated topic in the present day. Not only the medical field, there are other fields too which involve ethical, issues. This is referred to as professional ethics. There have even been steps to legalise professional ethics in order to maintain a high standard of professionalism and discipline, thereby protecting the rights of the consumer as well.

The medical practice is essentially patient oriented, here the patient-doctor relationship is important. The future of the medical field therefore greatly depends on the state of this relationship. The main aim of a doctor is to cure his patients. Therefore drugs are essential to cure or save the life of the patient. There is a standard regulation concerning the prescription of drugs to patients which must be followed by medical personnel. The prescription should contain the date, name of the patient, age and other details of the patient as well as the name of the drugs, dosage, doctor's seal and signature. When prescribing the drugs, the doctor should be honest enough to do so by using the generic name of that drug. Unfortunately however, most doctors only mention the drug by its brand name. Therefore this presents us with a serious moral and ethical dilemma.

Statistics show the pharmaceutical industry is the second largest profit making industry in the world. It is increasingly apparent that pharmaceutical companies market medicines which have identical medical properties, yet are different in price, colour, shape and size, taste and packaging to the unsuspecting patient who is the victim, of "respected" doctors.

Hence we see that this has become a very controversial issue in the debates of present day philosophers as well as medical paction.