

Preface

Role of Technology in Medicine

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Numerous technological advances in medicine have occurred over the last 3 decades. These have made tremendous impact on the way we care for patients, make diagnosis, prioritize our management steps and prognosticate. They made us focus more and more on the details of an apparently single disease entity in the past to split this into many subtypes. So much so that sometimes we find it extremely complex to put a coherent plan of care for a particular patient without waiting for the results of all components to fit together.

While I welcome the advances above, I have to warn our young doctors to jump immediately to investigation without completing the basic standards in clinical medicine; history taking and doing a thorough physical examination. During my daily round I have been noticing considerable laxity concerning these two essential components.

I have noticed many patients not being examined thoroughly and that not enough time was given to patients to give a good history. This has led as a consequence to diagnosis being delayed and initiation of treatment being postponed which has negatively affected the care of patients and increased the cost on patients.

From my observation, it seems that this issue is becoming widespread and is not limited to one institution. We, at the academic institutions, have huge responsibility in bringing things to the right tract. We have to emphasize on the importance of history taking and physical examination by setting the example in our daily practice. We have to reject the urge for sophisticated and expansive investigation unless they are absolutely needed for the diagnosis and management of patients. We must discourage the practice of requesting umbrella investigation for the something the patient does not have.

It has to be emphasized that the best doctor is the one who uses basic rules and technology in a balanced efficient way. I feel that many patients are over investigated and may actually get unneeded treatment. The role of a medical doctor is tremendously complex but should rest solidly on the basic rules of good history and good physical examination. The science and art of listening to the patient and performing a thorough physical examination remain unsurpassed by any laboratory, radiological or any technological examination. Those should be taken as supplementing and adding to history and physical examination but not as replacing them.

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