

## *Preface*

# **What is the Way Out? Train or Imprison Medical Personnel?**

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The question above may sound an odd question since the answer is seemingly very obvious. Events in recent days have made most of the medical doctors ask precisely this question.

It all started with an old man who was brought by a Civil Defense ambulance to one of the new MoH hospitals after he was found lying in a street with apparent injuries and possibly impaired level of consciousness. He was assessed by a junior resident in the ER who decided to order some blood tests and a CT scan. The order of blood tests was documented in the file while the CT order was not, but was documented on the order form only. The doctor was very busy and had seen 21 patients prior to seeing that patient on that night.

The following events were clearly a system failure. The patient was somehow sent to the X-ray department apparently without any adequate escort; he ended up in an X-ray room which was supposed to be under maintenance by the company supplying the machine. The room was supposed to be closed but unfortunately it was somehow opened. After he entered the room, it, for unknown reason, was closed and possibly locked. The patient never reported to the ER again. The family was contacted in the same night and when they asked about the patient, the answer was that he did not come back, and was assumed to have left to "avoid" being charged, a practice apparently commonly seen in some MoH hospitals.

A couple of days later and after an extensive search, the patient was found dead in the room. Subsequently, committees formed to investigate this issue decided that the receiving doctor should have 20% of the blame, while 80% of the blame should be on the higher administration and leaders in the hospital.

The General Director, the receiving doctor, and the X-ray technician were detained pending further investigation. Since the issue is being under prosecutor authority and the legal system, I will refrain from passing any opinion or reveal any information that might somehow affect the fairness of assessing the issue.

I view this event as an important stimulus to health policy makers to start handling the real issues through system reforms rather than individual "punishment" or scapegoats.

It is high time to have written standards, written guidelines, written protocols in all our health care institutions. All personnel need to be extensively trained and monitored to follow these standards, guidelines and protocols. The personnel shortage needs to be adequately addressed, the poor services need to be improved or closed, the staff job satisfaction need to be critically reviewed and improved, the shortage of medicines, support staff, the rapid expansion of services at the expense of adequate resources must be re-evaluated.

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Above all; a strategic, comprehensive master plan should to be developed in consultation and participation of the medical community and the society as a whole for the health care to be at an acceptable level for the twenty first century.

Piece meal picking on individuals to "blame" them for being at fault will not solve these complex issues. There is not a single individual who has a magic solution to all of these problems.

We should be looking at systems and should expand the discussion and participation of all concerned to come up with the suggestions and solutions. Courts will not solve the health issues; system change will.