

# The Libyan medical profession needs a regulatory body

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To the Editor: I am very grateful to Dr Elkhammas for his editorial that brought the issue of medical ethics in Libya to light [1]. I have been following the correspondence with interest and I feel it adds a great value to a debate of such an important issue [2, 3, 4].

It is very obvious to everybody who knows about the medical culture in Libya that there are major problems with ethical issues such as lack of patient confidentiality, no respect to patient autonomy and choice, and lack of informed consent. Although the Islamic values prohibit us from acting as 'God', unfortunately doctors still behave in that manner and the paternalistic attitude amongst Libyan doctors is the norm.

The editorial and various correspondents came up with practical solutions to try and change the current culture. Teaching courses in medical ethics, both for undergraduate students and postgraduate doctors as well as a code of ethics are essential steps [1]. Also, the teaching of medical ethics should be part of a program of continuous medical education and teaching- the- teachers courses. That hopefully will produce good role models amongst senior doctors from whom the new generation should learn [3]. Frank and open discussion of various ethical issues in the medical profession is essential [4]. Establishing a medical ethics task force will help improve the understanding and the application of proper ethical values in Libya [2]. However, all these suggestions would be difficult to implement without establishing an independent regulatory body to oversee and regulate the medical profession. At the moment it is not clear who actually regulates doctors in Libya, and a clear and transparent licensing process does not exist. There is no robust mechanism to check the credibility and credentials of doctors practicing in Libya. The General Medical Council in the UK or any other regulatory body from developed countries may be taken as a model to follow in Libya. The proposed body would be responsible for implementing, monitoring and setting the standards of good clinical practice. Without such a regulatory body I am sorry to say that any attempt to improve the health services in Libya would be futile.

## References:

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4. Bakoush O. Should we start debating medical ethics in our daily practice? *Libyan J Med*, AOP: 061227; 2007; 2(1)..