

Study of Knowledge, attitude and practice concerning some aspects of torture.

Shah MS*, Khan F**, Khalique N*, Khan Z*, Khan IM*, Haq I*, Ansari MA*, Ahmad A*.

* Department of Community Medicine, J.N. Medical College, A.M.U. Aligarh.

** Department of Microbiology, J.N. Medical College, A.M.U. Aligarh.

The study was conducted by the oral questionnaire method among the junior and senior resident doctors working in the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College Hospital, AMU, Aligarh, India as an attempt to observe the knowledge, attitude and practice of doctors regarding torture. Although, majority of the doctors are aware of various national and international human rights institutions, but they seem not to be aware of the human rights of the detainees. It is interesting to note that the doctors are aware of the long term physical and psychological effects of torture and also agreed that physical examination is not sufficient to detect torture sequelae. A large number of doctors have seen cases of torture, and were willing to treat them and felt reasonably competent. A significant number of doctors justified use of coercive technique and manhandling in dealing with detainees by law enforcement agencies. A small number of doctors expressed their unwillingness to get involved in the treatment of the victims of torture due to medicolegal consequence. The dissemination of information on human rights and medical ethics and incorporating them into the medical curriculum at undergraduate and postgraduate training was emphasised by majority of the respondents. Almost unanimous view was expressed by respondents on the importance of the role of medical ethics and the profession's responsibility to its members. An important finding of the study is the need for the government to help establishing counselling and rehabilitation centers for treatment of torture victims and educate its members. A large number of doctors mentioned the need of initiating community action in case of rape, child abuse, dowry victims and sexual harassment. Further, a majority of respondents expressed the view that the medical association should take the responsibilities of protecting the doctors who fearlessly testify cases of

torture besides disciplining doctors who facilitate torture. Respondents felt that the reasons for doctors' participation in torture need further study. It is encouraging that most of the responding physicians are willing to take up training and become counsellor for victims of torture to be able to provide treatment, counselling and rehabilitation.