

“INNOVATION AND NEW MODELS OF HEALTH CARE DEVELOPMENT”

'Patients' rights and professional dignity

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Professionals - Patients

- **Patient vulnerable to professional expertise and discretion**
- **Professional observes a universal code of behaviour acting in patient best interest and good faith**
- **Traditionally a partnership**

Evolution of Partnership

- **Changes in science, technology and the law**
- **Patients now more empowered**
- **A challenge for both parties to adapt**
- **Patient also an aware ‘consumer’**

UN Consumer Guidelines

- **Universal principle that governments should develop strong consumer protection policy**
- **Policies should reflect the economic, social and environmental conditions**
- **Guidelines are in the process of review**
- **Hong Kong has a role in the review**

Hong Kong

- **Many developing countries find it difficult to achieve world's best outcomes**
- **Hong Kong is highly regarded and expected to provide a framework of highest standard**
- **We should demonstrate 'world's best practice'**

What are UN Consumer Rights?

- **Protection from hazards**
- **Protection of economic interest**
- **Access to information**
- **Consumer education**
- **Availability of redress**
- **Freedom to present group views**
- **Promotion of sustainable consumption**

Changing the 'mindset'

- **Unfortunately few health professionals still consider themselves to be the only ones able to make a medical decision**
- **Reluctance to negotiate or consult in detail with patients**
- **Concern it will undermine professional dignity**

Patient Engagement

- **Times changing**
- **Need to engage closely with patients**
- **New social environment, and public expectation.**
- **Need to explore new models for medical and healthcare communication to meet the new social demand**

Joint Decision Making

- **Engaging in close consultation through decision making with patients (or their family members) can help reduce costs.**
- **Forming a close bond with patients and their care givers ensures trust and enhances treatment**

Care Givers

- **Care givers should be seen as complimenting work of professionals**
- **Care givers ensure that patients themselves are aware of the need to take responsibility for their treatment and meet their obligations**

Patient Advocates are Allies

- **Advocates have a role and are in a good position to ensure patients are aware of responsibility and obligations for their own health**
- **Professionals need allies to ensure their integrity is not undermined by unethical practitioners and shady business practices**

Applying UN Principles to Health

- **Observations can be made from examining the various principles in the UN Guidelines**
- **Guidelines indicate, in the context of patient/professional relationship, what health professionals and government should consider in working with patients as consumers of health services**

Protection from Hazards

- **Treatments and medicines must be safe.**
- **Patients should be instructed in the proper use of medicines and treatment**
- **Governments should adopt appropriate recall or warning processes**
- **Good communication - use relevant website references, notices in doctor's surgeries, hospital outpatient rooms**

Economic Interests

- **Measures controlling restrictive and other abusive business practices which may be harmful to consumers' economic interests must be in place**
- **Appropriate enforcement**
- **Consumer law is not an intrusion but a right**
- **Consumer law protects both general public and professional reputation**

Access to Information

- **Consumers are becoming more aware of alternatives**
- **Health professionals should be aware of the range of information publicly available and assist patients making an informed view**
- **Consumer empowerment should not be considered a threat**

Consumer Education

- **Consumers becoming aware of benefits of competition**
- **Price, choices, and quality of service important for an efficient health sector**
- **Health services should not be immune from competition**

Consumer Redress

- **Avenues are currently available**
- **Important they are not 'set in stone'**
- **Need to evolve and change with increased expectations, wider representation, appropriate evidentiary requirements**

Consumer Advocacy

- **Consumer advocacy is a consumer right**
- **Advocacy can have different aspects and can work with professionals and government**
- **Not only consumer groups, interest groups, but immediate family**

Conclusion

- **Need to appreciate a ‘consumer’ healthcare model and ‘consumer’ expectations**
- **There is no conflict with professionals**
- **Observing consumer rights, and keeping abreast of consumer demand will suit the needs of all involved - government, consumers and professionals**