

# Violence against health-providers is disappointingly spiraling now in China

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Within 10 days from May 28 through June 7 this year, a succession of nine violent incidents against health-providers happened in China. Just in the past 3 days, three more such events have occurred with one in my city of Suzhou, about 100 km west of Shanghai. A gynecologist was stabbed to death; a doctor was wounded in shock due to excessive blood loss by his previously comatose patient who was successfully-aroused after meticulous treatment; and several others were injured seriously. I am appalled and hurt this time. I have been sent into a downward spiral.

I have also heard previously about many reports of acts of violence against health-providers from varying media. However, I chose to turn a blind eye and kept silent. I used to keeping my views to myself. I have never commented on these news items. I have never circulated this news in my blog, my twitter or my wechat. I have also never retweeted this news in my friend circles. I don't wish for such adverse events to have any negative impact on me or my friends around me. On the contrary, I often write and publish essays, travelogs or popular medical science readings on my webpage to such an extent that it helps establish a closer relationship with the patients while simultaneously creating a harmonious atmosphere between doctors and patients. I do believe that a positive energy build up will lead to future harmonious doctors-patients' relationships. But the reality of the situation shatters my wishful thinking.

I was born in a small village in the northern Jiangsu plain in the 1970s. When I was a boy, I clearly remember knowing that only two kinds of people deserved the salutation "Mr.": teachers and doctors. Back then, the villagers thought that the teachers and doctors were literate and should be esteemed. Esteem and respect for knowledge and intellectuals had long been taken for

granted in Chinese society over the course of several thousand years. If a patient was refused further therapy by township-level doctors, the family members would bring the patient home without any complaints.

Following the implementation of reforms and opening-up policy at the end of 1970s, Chinese society has seen great changes. The current society, collectively and individually has amassed great wealth. Almost everyone rushes off to exchanging favors for power and wealth, which they think are omnipotent, even in a struggle with death. In a society, where power and wealth are worshipped, and knowledge and intellectuals are looked down upon, it's no surprise that violence against health-providers happens almost on a daily basis across China.

Another factor is the incendiary nature of reports by the irresponsible media, which worsens the existing challenging and stressful doctors-patients relationships. It's certain that it's impossible for a reporter without a medical background to report what he or she considers as truth which needs to be disclosed. Many reports make absolutely no sense from a medical perspective, but go viral online. Misunderstandings are thus deepening. Reporters writing these reports go at large.

Finally, laws and regulations exist in name only. We have written many laws and regulations, but they are seldom carried out. Medical disputes happen frequently every year across China, but very few are settled by the judiciary channel. Absurdly, medical dispute settlement is largely dependent on the degrees patients' family members, friends and even professional medical troublemakers bring troubles to hospitals rather than on the rights and wrongs. Dereliction of duty of relevant departments should also take responsibility for the worsening doctors-patients

relationships.

What can we do about this spiraling violence against health-providers? Firstly, I think the tradition of esteem and respect for knowledge and intellectuals should be reinstalled as soon as possible. Wealth accumulation and cultural progress simultaneously are truly signs of social progress. We should guard the awe to knowledge rather than power and money. The very fact is that science and technology advancement is far from solving all medical problems. By contrast, many diseases we know are actually incurable. What the doctors and nurses have to do is just alleviate and comfort the patient and the situation. We hope to do our utmost to save every patient, but even we have no other way when death falls. We, including doctors and patients, should know our limitations of knowledge. Also, birth, aging, illness and death takes natural course in life journey, to which, science and technology do little as of today.

Second, irresponsible reporters must be held accountable, charged and punished. We welcome reporters with medical background or relevant experience, who present objective, accurate reports about medical disputes. We think that those without a sense of medical knowledge and expertise should refrain from commenting or face possible lawsuits as you have already harmed too many patients, doctors, and this society as well. Disappointingly, very few irresponsible

reporters or media personnel have been brought to charge. The apologies from those irresponsible reporters or media don't suffice to heal the wounded relationships between doctors and patients.

Finally, law enforcement should be strengthened. We not only write laws, but also carry them out. Judiciary channel should strongly intervene in any medical disputes unsettled by civil consultancy. Disputing parties should respect the trial results. If I lose the lawsuit, I should accept the punishment; if you lose, I would rather put you in jail. Derelict bureaucracy should also be brought to charge and punished severely. A typical medical dispute settled by a public, fair and impartial trial should be exemplified and propagated over China. By so doing, laws and regulations will gradually be part of medical dispute settlement.

In spite of frequent violence against health-providers, I love my profession and I'm willing to read aloud again the Hippocrates deceleration before my patients. I know your sufferings. I will do what I can to alleviate your sufferings and save your lives. But I'm just an ordinary being with medical knowledge, but not an omnipotent deity.

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