

NOTE

Certificate of Good Standing **Shah Alam Khan writes :**

For any Indian doctor applying for a course or even employment outside the country, it is usually essential to procure a “Certificate of Good Standing” from the Medical Council of India (MCI). This writer has gone through this arduous task on a couple of occasions. Correctly enough the validity of this certificate is for a year and for re-certification again it is necessary to go through the same procedure. That is to say the Council keeps a check on a doctor’s character on an annual basis.

A couple of weeks back, Dr Ketan Desai, the President of MCI was nabbed by the CBI on charges of taking a bribe of Rupees 2 crores in lieu of recognizing a Medical College from Punjab. How ironic could that be! President of the Council which issues Certificates of Good Standing to thousands of doctors has a dubious character himself. No wonder, the Certificate of Good Standing of the MCI is not signed by its President. This task is left with the Registrar of the Council.

It is funny (and scary) how often the government system and its characters are an oxymoron to their own value system. How often people are betrayed by those in whom dispose their faith and belief. Judges, civil servants, politicians, journalists, doctors.

Loss of faith of the common man in government machinery is an open secret. People like Dr Desai only reaffirm this loss. It is this breach of faith which throws a life-line to the ever expanding private sector. Day in and day out, new hospitals and private medical schools pock mark the Indian landscape. Rules are twisted. Illegal permissions granted. The party goes on. The loot goes unabated. Not that the Private health sector should not exist. Unarguably the government health sector should be supplemented but not substituted by a robust private sector. In fact some of the best brains in Medical sciences in the country are the product of a vibrant private health sector.

The acceptance of “gifts” from pharmaceutical companies is a common occurrence in thousands of government hospitals across the country. How conveniently a “bribe” can be changed into a “gift” is something on which concerned citizens need to ponder. Pharmaceutical companies set out big sums in their budgets to lure doctors into writing their drugs and implants. It is tragic that the corridor of most government hospitals across India are filled with sick and dying patients as well as a good number of neatly dressed medical representatives with well polished shoes. In fact there lies the class difference, bigger the company, more suave the representative!

The most dangerous part of the story is that with exponential (and selective) economic growth, there has been an intrusion of foreign companies on the Indian scene. Most CME programs, medical conferences and surgical workshops are now sponsored (read hijacked) by these profit making machines. The promotion of implants and drugs in the name of scientific research in a country with no clear guidelines and checks is a matter of urgent concern. The rampant use of implants actually meant for the western population is riddled with intrinsic complications. But who cares? The flow of money washes away the ethical concerns. □□□