

## ABDUCTION OF DOCTORS; DAMAGE BEYOND IMMAGINATION

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Medical profession is considered as the most attractive, noble and rewarding. However it is demanding and needs devotion. Specialisation in this field is a dream of all but finally a few manage. Like all other professionals a doctor also passes through stages of learning, earning and returning. However unlike others doctors have a lengthy period of learning and therefore they start earning late. Returning to the society in the form of his skills and services also remains a challenge.

Threats are part and parcel of this profession. Starting from being exposed to disease friendly bugs and long duty hours to medicolegal cases and lot many doctors daily are faced with countless problems. The recent security threats have doubled their troubles. The abduction of senior doctors for ransom have demoralised the doctors community of this part of the world. Under the Pakistani law kidnapping is of two types:

Kidnapping from Pakistan; Whoever conveys any person beyond the limits of Pakistan without the consent of that person, or of some person legally authorized to consent on behalf of that person is said to kidnap that person from Pakistan<sup>1</sup>.

Kidnapping from Lawful Guardianship; Whoever takes or entices any minor under fourteen years of age if a male, or under sixteen years of age if a female, or any person of unsound mind, out of the keeping of the lawful guardian of such minor or person of unsound mind, without consent of such guardian, said to kidnap such minor or person from lawful guardianship (Section 362 of PPC, 1860)<sup>1</sup>.

Abduction on the other hand is defined in the following words:

“whoever by force compels, or by any deceitful means induces, any person to go from any place, is said to abduct that person (Section 362 of PPC, 1860)<sup>1</sup>.” In kidnapping the minor is just taken away. Force need not be used. However, in case of abduction force, compulsion or deceitful means are used. Secondly, kidnapping is committed only in respect of a male under fourteen or female minor under sixteen years of age, whereas, as far as abduction is concerned, any person of any age can be abducted. But in general both the terms are used interchangeably. When used in this way kidnapping or abduction means “an offence involving taking and conveying away a person against his or her will, either by force, fraud, or intimidation<sup>2</sup>.” The punishment for kidnapping or abduction in the law is imprisonment for

a term of seven years, ten years, life time or sentence to death, subject to the conditions of kidnapping (Sections 363, 364, 365-A of PPC, 1860)<sup>1</sup>.

The North West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa) is bordered with Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) which is a buffer zone between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The NWFP (KP) is a poor province with a population of 23.313 million and a literacy rate of 53%<sup>3</sup>. Some reports show that per capita income in Pakistan is about 1000 US \$ while the government official figures show per capita income in the NWFP lesser than 30% from the rest of the country<sup>4</sup>. The police strength in the NWFP (KP) is 53087 which makes a Police/Population ratio as 1:439<sup>5</sup>. Kidnapping is on the rise in the NWFP (KP). The media reports state that due to kidnapping in the NWFP (KP), particularly Peshawar, 90% business activities have been affected. There has been 70% increase in kidnapping for ransom in the year 2009. This trend has greatly affected the business community<sup>6</sup>. Rahimullah Yousufzai pointed out that the Pakistanis, both resourceful and un-resourceful (rich and poor) are being kidnapped in ever greater numbers for ransom and the government is helpless in preventing kidnappings or recovering the victims<sup>7</sup>.

kidnapping and abduction if not controlled at earliest may spiral out of the control, and disrupt the entire social structure of the society resulting in negative trends. Migration of doctors from the city and from the country is a major negative trend related to kidnapping. Doctors migrate for better structure of medical education, desire for better income, general security and improved prospects for family<sup>8</sup>. Study conducted by Talati and Pappas<sup>9</sup> revealed that about 1150 doctors emigrate while the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment estimates that annually about 1000 to 1500 physicians leave the country, of whom 10-15% return for a net migration of 900 to 1275 physicians<sup>10</sup>. According to the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) currently registered doctors in the country are 137790<sup>11</sup>. However, looking at the future, Pakistan will face physician shortages in the range between 57,900 and 451,102 in 2020 depending on assumptions about future need<sup>9</sup>. A study<sup>12</sup> found that Pakistan had contributed about 13,000 medical graduates to the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. With the rising law and order situation in Pakistan, many doctors are eager to leave the country for a better life structure.

The working environments have remained unfa-

avorable for doctors since long. The life of a doctor is full of struggles. The undergraduate years of doctor,s life are full of academic stresses . After graduation a young graduate is faced with a number of problems. After successfully completing the internship, the problem of finding a postgraduate placement becomes important. Acquiring a post graduate degree is not an easy task. Success rate in exams at earlier attempts is low and sometimes it takes years before a doctor gets certified. Starting private practice or getting a consultant job in a govt institution is, at times, difficult and the remuneration is not always attractive. The general practice is also full of risk in current law and order situation . Political disturbances, insecurity, kidnapping for ransom and the trends of 'suicide bombing' has added more to the misery of doctors. At a consultant level, doctors mostly remains unsatisfied and look for better prospects. The doctors opting for places like Middle East,USA and UK also face multile problems. Coming back to pakistan and resettling again is a challenge for doctors and their children.

The concept of holidays for doctors working in hospitals as such does not exist. Consultants remain on call for emergencies at evening,night and even on Sundays. They do not have sufficient relaxation time at homes and/or outside. Our hospitals do not have an organised system of security and transportation for on call doctors.

Counselling is an important step of management of patients. It involves long sessions of explanations, discussions ,arguments etc. After knowing the facts that abductors masquerade as patients most of the professionals have minimized their counselling duration. Mobile phone a source of quick communication are not attended for the same reasons. Leaving private clinics earlier than its due time has also adversely affected the management plans.

Private practice is the major source of earning for doctors.consultants sacrifice their rest hours for this purpose. It also improves professional skills of a doctor.private practices also creates an atmosphere of a healthy competition among practising consultants .The ultimate beneficiary is the patient and the health system.This trend has started vanishing after recent surges in abduction. There is a feel of emptiness among doctors regarding their practices. Depression which already is common among doctors<sup>13,14</sup> seem to have further aggravated.

Authorities have recently decided to issue arm licenses for the doctors for their protection. Whether this strategy was effective time would decide. However it is a fact that a doctor is well trained in using tools which saves a life but how he uses tools not meant for this purpose seems ridiculous.Managing a patient while one,s mind is occupied with issues related to the use of arms is an unusual situation.

Research is the base of health system.the results of research forms a foundation for the management of diseases. Research needs a healthy peaceful mind. For smooth delieverance of health services to the society a doctor,s fitness both physical and mental is of utmost importance. Due to the demanding nature of this profession maintenance of physical Fitness is already a problem.Issues like insecurity has threatend the mental fitness of health professionals. If this trend lingerd on for long time the scientific activities may cease to a complete halt. unlike other damages done by abduction the one that has affected the integrity and peace of minds of scientific think tank and thus the research work is irreparable. The estimate of the loss of the level of interest that doctors have been seen loosing and its adverse effects on society as a result, is beyond imagination.

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