



Workshop in the Philosophy of Medicine for the National Iranian Medical Students Olympiad

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Report

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On the 4th of February 2015, the Iranian Ministry of Health and Medical Education hosted a 1-day workshop on the philosophy of medicine. This workshop was the first in a series of workshops the aim of which is to open interdisciplinary dialogue between medicine and philosophy. The aims of this workshop, organized by the Department of Education of the Iranian Ministry of Health and Medical Education, were to increase understanding of the key issues in discussions on health, disease, medical thinking, and clinical judgment.

The workshop was attended by 60 participants who were faculty members of medical schools all over the country with a wide range of specialties from surgery to biochemistry. They represented their own university, and committed to train and prepare medical students to enter the Olympiad.

The workshop was divided into 2 sessions and 4 topics. Each of these sessions was briefly introduced by one expert and followed by 45 minutes of chaired plenary discussion. The topics discussed consisted of 2 on ontology of medicine and 2 on medical epistemology.

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In this paper, I report on the content of this workshop, summarizing the introductory talks as well as the content and outcomes of the subsequent discussion. Moreover, 4 detailed papers, each based on one of the presentations given at this workshop, will appear in the future issues.

Dr Alireza Monajemi, Head of the Scientific Board of Philosophy of Medicine Chapter in the Olympiad, opened the day by explaining the structure and goal of philosophy of medicine in Olympiad. He argued that many physicians and other healthcare providers are involved in health care, but too few of them critically reflect on their own practice. The philosophy of medicine chapter in the Olympiad aimed at introducing critical philosophical reflection to medical schools and highlighting its importance in medical research and practice. The scientific Olympiad for the students of medical sciences was designed with the aim of motivating students in different majors of medical sciences to acquire reflective and critical thinking skills on different medical issues that ultimately improve healthcare. (Adibi, Hadadgar, Haghjooy Javanmard, Monajemi & Hadizadeh, 2009; Adibi, Hadadgar, Hadizadeh, Monajemi, Eftekhari, Haghjoo Javanmard, et al, 2011; Monajemi, Arabshahi, Soltani, Arbabi, Akbari, Custers, et al, 2012).

Session one: Ontology

The first session was dedicated to ontology of health and disease. The first speaker in this session, Dr Hamidreza Namazi, faculty member of the Medical Ethics and History of Medicine Research Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran, productively revealed that the conception of health and disease is far from straightforward. Historically, there have been multiple ways of establishing disease. He explained each disease conception and clearly showed its implications in diagnosis and management of the diseases.

In the second talk of the session, Dr Goli, Daneshe Tandorosti Institute, Isfahan, Iran, argued that the time has passed when we could draw a clear line between medicine and philosophy. He sharply discriminated biomedical paradigm from bio-psycho-social paradigm, and explained the implications of each paradigm in clinical practice. He successfully demonstrated that each type of medical practice is deeply influenced by its own philosophical view.

Session two: Epistemology

The second session of the day focused on the epistemology of medicine. The questions of what constitutes a medical thinking and what is the nature of clinical judgment and decision making, were also touched upon.

Dr Ahmad Reza Hemmati Moghaddam, Institute for Research in Fundamental Sciences (IPM), School of Analytic Philosophy, Tehran, Iran, introduced this topic by defining the concepts of epistemology in general. He explained the basics of the Bayesian approach in medicine and effectively showed its applications

in everyday clinical practice.

The second speaker in this session, Dr Alireza Monajemi, faculty member of the Philosophy of Science Department, Institute for Humanities and Cultural studies, Tehran, Iran, began by introducing two major conceptions of medicine in the philosophy of science tradition; medicine as science versus medicine as arts. He concluded that medicine as science is the base of evidence-based medicine, whereas the medicine as art view is the base of narrative medicine.

Conclusion

The workshop revealed a considerable shared concern among speakers and participants about the strong link between philosophy of medicine and medical research and practice. There was a misunderstanding about the domain of philosophy of medicine among participants, as some equated philosophy of medicine with medical ethics, while others reduced medical philosophy to psychological and social aspects of health and diseases. Linking medical philosophy to clinical practice helps healthcare practitioners to gain a better insight on this domain.

Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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