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Vijayaprasad Gopichandran

Dynamics of Trust in Doctor-Patient Relationship in India

A Clinical, Social and Ethical Analysis

 Springer

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*This book is dedicated to Mrs. Bhuvanewari
and Mr. Gopichandran, for giving me life,
nurture, values and freedom.*

Preface

We live in troubled times with rapid erosion of trust in the physician-patient relationship. There is an increase in the reports of violence against physicians and healthcare providers. The crisis of mistrust is progressing and invading all aspects of the medical enterprise. In this context, there is a need to understand the dynamics of trust in the physician-patient relationship. What makes patients trust their physicians? What erodes the trust? Is trust a value in health care? Can trust be built through specific interventions? All these questions arise in this context. Much research on trust in the physician-patient relationship has emerged from the high-income-country settings. In the USA, the UK, Australia and many European countries, trust has been measured and quantified, and much research has been done on various aspects of trust in the physician-patient relationship. The literature on trust in the physician-patient relationship in India is sparse. There is a need to understand the trust dynamics in the Indian context.

This book is the output of doctoral research that I undertook between the years 2011 and 2015. The research was motivated by several questions that personally struck me as a practitioner of primary care in a rural clinic in south India. It started as a qualitative exploration and iteratively grew into a quantitative survey, scale development and validation exercise. Several peer-reviewed scientific publications have emerged from this Ph.D. research. These are independent stand-alone research publications, and they are richly cited throughout this book. However, none of these publications provide a comprehensive overview of the physician-patient trust dynamics that emerged from the overall study. I felt the need to write this book, to give the broad bird's-eye view of the trust dynamics. I hope this book fulfils that purpose.

The chapters of this book have been restructured and organized differently compared to the Ph.D. dissertation. The chapters describe the various phases of the research work, and I have strung them together to reflect the sequence in which the understanding of the phenomenon of trust unravelled itself to me. I have consciously removed some sections from the main dissertation, for the purpose of brevity and clarity. Some chapters carry statistical analysis, numbers and tables and their interpretations as they are found in the dissertation. These help to make sense of the scientific rigour that went into the data analysis and interpretation.

I have written this book in an academic style and for readers from medicine, health care, medical sociology, health service sector, health system research, medical anthropology and other specialties that deal with physician–patient relationship issues. Though it is written in an academic style, even the lay reader can make sense from many chapters of the book. The scale development section of the book may be of interest to those working in the area of psychometrics and patient-reported outcome measurement.

I do not claim that the theory of trust I propose in this book is the final and accurate theory of trust in physicians in a developing healthcare setting like India. The area of trust dynamics needs more research and deeper understanding. However, I think this book will contribute to widening the scope of trust research in India and will expand the various dimensions of trust as we understand it today. I wish all the readers a productive reading experience.

Chennai, India

Vijayaprasad Gopichandran

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