



VIOLENCE AGAINST DOCTORS

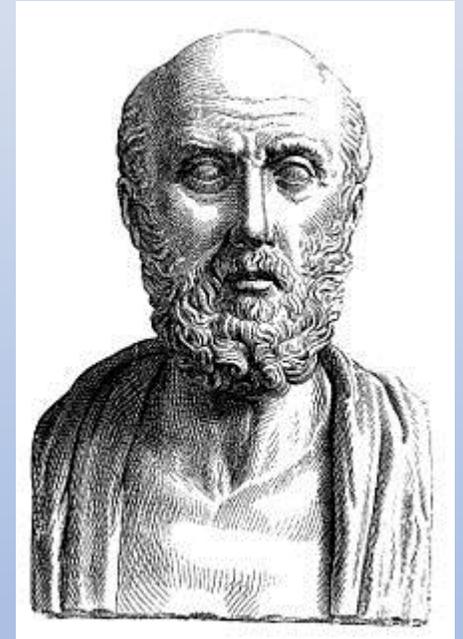
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IS VIOLENCE AGAINST DOCTORS AND OTHER HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS SOMETHING NEW ?

One well-known incident occurred in Greece in 1962 when a famous surgeon (1) at the « Evangelismos » Hospital in Athens was shot dead by the husband of a young lady who died after surgery for a brain tumour.

Furthermore, we can suppose that this problem had been highlighted already a very long time ago because Hippocrates, in his famous aphorisms or quotations, advised doctors :- not to operate on patients suffering from incurable diseases – presumably through fear of retaliation on the part of patients or relatives.





WHY IS THE AEMH CLOSELY INVOLVED IN THE SURVEY OF THIS PHENOMENON ?

The answer to this question is obvious. As we well know, the majority of the acts of violence against doctors worldwide take place in hospitals and, in particular, in accident and emergency departments.

The AEMH, as a « European Association of Senior Hospital Physicians » has the possibility and I would even go as far as to say responsibility to collect, investigate, process, evaluate such incidents.

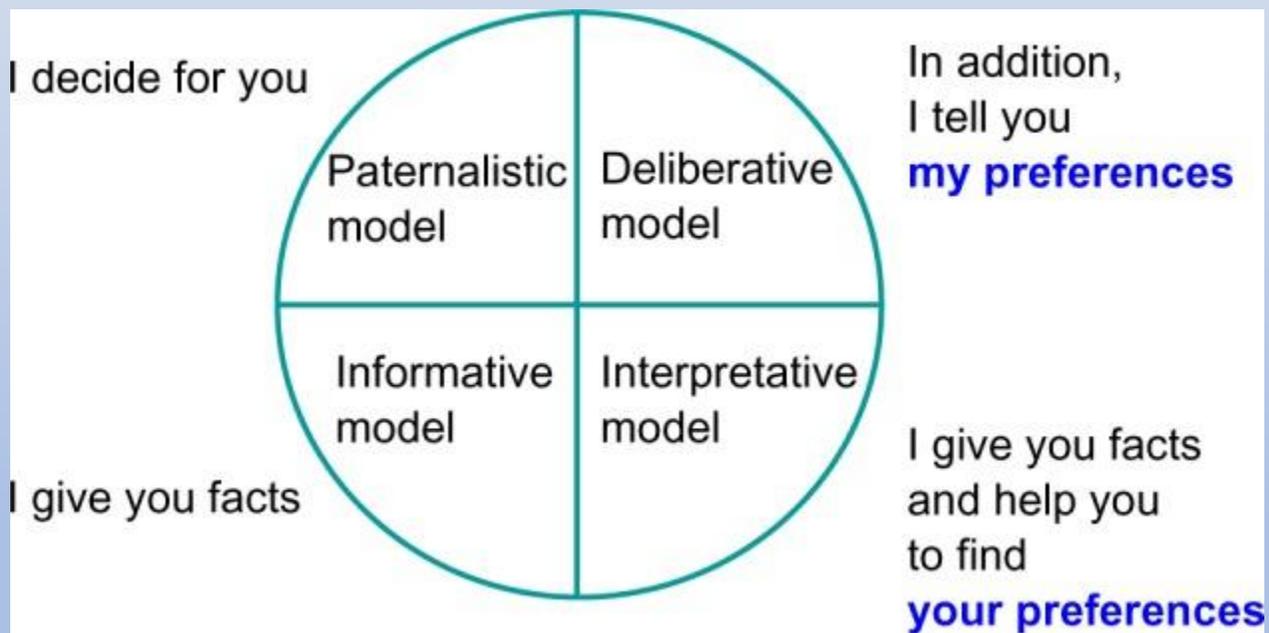


ANOTHER QUESTION IS :- WHY IS VIOLENCE AGAINST DOCTORS NOW ON THE INCREASE ?

Initially, doctors had an almost divine status until Hippocrates made the differentiation between religious beliefs and established that observations should be the basis of scientific médecine. In the Hippocratic Oath, medical ethics were raised above self-interest and social class (5th century B.C.).

In modern times, an increase in education and income levels throughout the world has led to further erosion of public trust and confidence in the medical profession.

MODELS OF DOCTOR-PATIENT RELATIONSHIPS





WHEN DOES THIS RELATIONSHIP TURN TO ADVERSITY ?

- When unrealistic hopes or expectations of patients or relatives are not met
- When unexpected complications arise during treatment
- When patients feel that they have been offended, neglected or exploited

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CAUSES OF THE BREAKDOWN IN THE DOCTOR-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP ?

Several major factors may lead to patients' or relatives' hopes or expectations to be unrealistic

When doctors have to fulfil promises made by other professionals such as public insurers who offer « health for everyone for every case ». Also, there is often a discrepancy between what is communicated by the mass media and internet as being the medical state of the art and real-life possibilities

Furthermore, patients and relatives usually interpret long waiting times or delays as neglect and as a result, become unfavourably disposed to healthcare professionals.



WHAT ARE THE MAIN CAUSES OF THE BREAKDOWN IN THE DOCTOR-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP ?

When unexpected treatment complications occur, patient's or relative's anger is often due to excessive reassurance or insufficient information on the part of the medical profession before the onset of treatment about the possible complications or side effects of such a procedure or medication.

When patients or relatives feel offended, neglected or exploited, there may have been a problem of misunderstanding or misinterpretation somewhere along the line of the doctor's point of view and/or a really incorrect opinion on the part of the doctor.

As professionals, we have to always bear in mind the fact that it is the patient who is in a weak position and try to find an approach that suits his or her personality.



WHY DOES VIOLENCE AGAINST DOCTORS SEEM TO HAVE BEEN ON THE INCREASE IN RECENT TIMES ?

We can make several assumptions here and study the roles played by mass-media, the internet, health insurance advertising and even pre-electoral promises of political parties, but we must first establish the facts.

In order to obtain reliable and accurate data through a survey of such a large field, I would propose the inclusion in this survey of data on time, place (for example, outpatient care unit, hospital, department etc.) and, if possible, information from persons directly involved in the incident (for example, doctors, nurses, patients, relatives and from any eye-witnesses, if there were any.)



AEMH CONTRIBUTION TO THE JOINT WORK CONCERNING VIOLENCE AGAINST DOCTORS

Hospital doctors are the ones that have to deal more often with violence as they have to face emergencies, life threatening situations, than any other physician.

They are the most concerned about this but as in many countries they have to cope with work overload they are often reluctant to lose time with questionnaires and skeptic about the usefulness of such initiatives.

AEMH can be very effective in motivating hospital doctors to participate in this project



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION