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OPINION

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A cardiologist flaunts a stent firm's wares at a medical conclave. A doctor is punished for exposing the pharma-doc nexus

MEDICINE IN THE DARK AGE OF MONEY

This is the latest whiz kid among cardiac stents. Nowhere else in the world you will have a stent like this. I have done 56 so far. No complications at all, affordable too." This is how a cardiologist started his live streaming video at the National Interventional Council (NIC) conference in a five-star hotel in Delhi where the conference organisers received several crores of rupees for the extravaganza.

Paper advertisements and TV commercials are old hat now: The medical advertisements there look like kindergarten stuff. Now, live streaming by a flamboyant cardiologist in a so-called medical conference where normally the science of medicine has to be debated is the in-thing. Even the Chinese device-maker whose stent is not passed by the "great" FDA is one of the sponsors and must have also paid crores. How much will this brand ambassador, the flamboyant cardiologist, get?

Where is medical ethics? Where is our great Medical Council of India (MCI), the watchdog which is supposed to keep a watchful eye on medical ethics? What ethics does the MCI itself follow in regulating medical education? What have

we come to and what about the safety of our rich patients who go to the hospitals?

Today, a case can be made out for angioplasty in any one of any age who goes to the hospital as coronary artery blocks (not coronary artery disease) can be demonstrated in anyone, including children. In this scenario, who is safe?

Pharmaceutical companies 'plotted to destroy cancer drugs to drive up prices', the *Independent* reported. After purchasing five different cancer drugs from GlaxoSmith Kline, Aspen Pharmacare tried to sell them in Europe for up to 40 times their previous price, the paper said quoting a report in the *Sunday Times* on April 15, 2017. Busulfan is an old hat in treating leukaemia. It used to sell for 5.20 pounds a couple of years ago in England. It now sells at 65.20 pounds there. This is an old drug and there is nothing new or exciting about it.

While bargaining over drug prices in Spain, the company wanted to raise the price by 4,000 times. When the government did not agree, it threatened to stop cancer drug supply in Spain in an attempt to take the country for a ride. In fact, it would have been a great boon for the Spaniards to live with-



Parents get lost in the cacophony of vaccine threats and ads. The hapless victims do not have a voice. Another good soul fighting for the voiceless infants is Dr Jacob Puliyaal



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out the dangers of these anti-cancer drugs.

The cover story of Outlook magazine on April 17, 2017 is still worse. We have been fighting a losing battle against vaccinations for decades. The Outlook cover reads: *When a baby is a business opportunity*. "Scared middle-class India buys unwanted vaccines, some 15 of them, as big pharma helps doctors rake in the moolah with 30-300% mark-ups," it adds. The more dangerous trend is that the IAP (Indian Academy of Paediatrics), the apex body of child specialists in the country, has now been found to be a partner in this venal business. On January 20, 2017, Dr Vipin Vashista, a former convener of IAP, was unceremoniously eased out of IAP for blowing the whistle on the big-money nexus in the body.

The health ministry, I am told, is in the know of things, but prefers to do nothing. The ministry is maybe afraid of the bigwigs in the vaccine business. Are we ready to bring forth a full generation of Indians with crippled immune systems thanks to so-many useless and dangerous vaccines being used when they are born? Parents get lost in the cacophony of vaccine threats and adver-

tisements and the hapless victims do not have a voice in the true sense of the word. Another good soul fighting for the voiceless infants is Dr Jacob Puliyaal in Delhi. He is a good friend and a fellow traveller in the fight against useless vaccines.

We are already in the dark ages of money which James Kennedy, a journalist, calls monetary fascism. "Milton Friedman and the Chicago School of Economics claimed to have refined and developed modern, scientific tools of 'free market capitalism', capable of unlocking ever greater rewards from Adam Smith's simple, primitive concept of free markets ... In truth, it was nothing more than a cloak of deception—providing cover for the unscrupulous behaviour of investment bankers, corporate raiders, speculators, off-shore corporation, debt mongers and bubble pushers (typically one and the same). The enhanced rewards came from the pilfering of capital investments and technology from generations past, the liquidation of employees and off-shoring of production, the pilfering of pension accounts and the termination or spin-out of R&D departments and option packages to executives and directors that

focused on short term stock price targets," says Kennedy and gives the example of AT & T: Bell Labs, once part of AT&T. The father of all modern telecommunication and electronics technology today "morphed into Lucent Technology". Lucent quickly "looted the legacy portfolio of Bell Laboratories" to enrich themselves and shareholders, leaving a worthless shell that was eventually merged with Alcatel.

So far so good but these do not deal with human life and health. But when monetary fascism comes to medical business, life becomes difficult for humans and the human race is threatened with slow annihilation for the sake of making money for the few. Today we have seen only a few of the glaring dangers of monetary fascism in medicine but this is only the tip of the iceberg.

The big belly under the water is the whole gamut of corporate monstrosity in medicine which is for another day. I am reminded of what Benjamin Rush, a founding father of the US, warned about not letting any one system of healthcare dominate and monopolise medical care. They did not pay heed to his warning and we are suffering the consequences today.

ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲ ನೀಟ್ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆ ನಿರಾತಂಕ

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು: ವೈದ್ಯ ಹಾಗೂ ದಂತ ವೈದ್ಯ ಪದವಿ ಪ್ರವೇಶಕ್ಕೆ ಸಿಬಿಎಸ್‌ಇ ದೇಶಾದ್ಯಂತ ನಡೆಸಿದ ನೀಟ್ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆ ಸಣ್ಣಪುಟ್ಟ ಗೊಂದಲ ಮಧ್ಯೆ ಯಶಸ್ವಿಯಾಗಿ ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಪೂರ್ಣಗೊಂಡಿದೆ.

ದೇಶದ 2200 ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಹಾಗೂ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಸೇರಿದಂತೆ ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಎಂಟು ಕೇಂದ್ರದಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆದ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸುಮಾರು 11 ಲಕ್ಷ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಹಾಜರಾಗಿದ್ದರು. ಬೆಂಗಳೂರಿನ ಆರ್ಮಿ ಪಬ್ಲಿಕ್ ಶಾಲಾ ಕೇಂದ್ರದಲ್ಲಿ ಐದು ನಿಮಿಷ ತಡವಾಗಿ ಆಗಮಿಸಿದ್ದಕ್ಕೆ, ಪ್ರವೇಶ ನಿರಾಕರಿಸಿದ್ದನ್ನು ವಿರೋಧಿಸಿ ಸಿಬ್ಬಂದಿ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ಪೋಷಕರು ಮುಗಿಬಿದ್ದರು. ಇದರೊಂದಿಗೆ ಕೆಲವೆಡೆ ಬಯೋಮೆಟ್ರಿಕ್ ಹಾಜರಾತಿ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಸರಿಯಾದ ಮಾಹಿತಿ ದೊರೆಯದೆ ಪರದಾಡುವಂತಾಯಿತು.

ಬಿ.10ಕ್ಕೆ ಆರಂಭವಾದ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆ ಆರಂಭದಲ್ಲಿ ಬಯೋಮೆಟ್ರಿಕ್ ಹಾಜರಾತಿ ಪಡೆಯಬೇಕಿದ್ದ ಕಾರಣ, ಒಂದು ಗಂಟೆ ಮುಂಚಿತವಾಗಿ ಪರೀಕ್ಷಾ ಕೇಂದ್ರದ ಬಳಿ ಹಾಜರಿರುವಂತೆ ಸೂಚಿಸಲಾಗಿತ್ತು. ಕೆಲವೆಡೆ ಬಯೋಮೆಟ್ರಿಕ್ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯಿಂದ ತೊಂದರೆಯಾಗಿದೆ. ಇನ್ನು ಕೆಲವೆಡೆ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿ ಹಾಲ್ ಟಿಕೆಟ್‌ಗೂ, ಬಯೋಮೆಟ್ರಿಕ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಭಾವಚಿತ್ರಕ್ಕೂ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆ ಕಂಡುಬಂದ ಕಾರಣ, ಗೊಂದಲ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣವಾಗಿತ್ತು. ಅಂತಿಮವಾಗಿ ಪರೀಕ್ಷಾ ಮೇಲ್ವಿಚಾರಕರು ಆಧಾರ್ ಪ್ರತಿ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೀಲಿಸಿ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾಗವಹಿಸಲು ಅನುಮತಿ ನೀಡಿದರು.

ಪ್ರವೇಶ ನಿರಾಕರಣೆ

ಪರೀಕ್ಷಾ ಕೇಂದ್ರದೊಳಗೆ 9.30ರೊಳಗೆ ಎಲ್ಲ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಹಾಜರಿರಬೇಕೆಂದು ಸೂಚಿಸಲಾಗಿತ್ತು.

ಆರ್ಮಿ ಪಬ್ಲಿಕ್ ಶಾಲಾ ಕೇಂದ್ರಕ್ಕೆ ಐದು ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಸುಮಾರು 10 ನಿಮಿಷ ತಡವಾಗಿ ಬಂದಿದ್ದರಿಂದ, ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆ ಬರೆಯಲು ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳು ನೀಡಲಿಲ್ಲ. ಈ ವೇಳೆ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿ, ಪೋಷಕರು ಮತ್ತು ಸಿಬ್ಬಂದಿಗಳ ಮಧ್ಯೆ ಮಾತಿನ ಚಕಮಕಿ ನಡೆಯಿತು. ಆದರೆ ಸಮಯ ಮೀರಿದ್ದರಿಂದ ಯಾವುದೇ ಕಾರಣಕ್ಕೂ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆ ನೀಡಲು ಸಾಧ್ಯವಿಲ್ಲ ಎಂದು ಹೇಳಿ ವಾಪಸು ಕಳಿಸಿದ್ದಾರೆ.

ಈ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಪ್ರತಿಕ್ರಿಯಿಸಿರುವ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು, ಸಂಚಾರ ದಟ್ಟನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಬರುವ ವೇಳೆ ತಡವಾಗಿತ್ತು. 9.40ಕ್ಕೆ ಬಂದರೂ, ಅವಕಾಶ ನೀಡಿಲ್ಲ. ಇದರಿಂದ ಒಂಪು ವರ್ಷ ಕಷ್ಟಪಟ್ಟಿರುವುದು ವ್ಯರ್ಥವಾಗಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಬೇಸರ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಪಡಿಸಿದರು.



ಸುತ್ತೋಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಆಭರಣ, ವಾಚ್, ರಬ್ಬರ್, ಕ್ಯಾಲ್ಕುಲೇಟರ್‌ಗಳನ್ನು ಸೇರಿದಂತೆ

ಯಾವುದೇ ವಸ್ತುಗಳನ್ನು ಪರೀಕ್ಷಾ ಕೇಂದ್ರದೊಳಗೆ ತರುವಂತಿಲ್ಲ ಎಂದು ಸೂಚಿಸಲಾಗಿತ್ತು. ಕೆಲ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ನಿಯಮ ಪಾಲಿಸದ ಹಿನ್ನೆಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ, ಪರೀಕ್ಷಾ ಕೇಂದ್ರದ ಹೊರ ಭಾಗದಲ್ಲಿ ಆಭರಣ, ವಾಚ್‌ಗಳನ್ನು ಪೋಷಕರಿಗೆ ನೀಡುತ್ತಿರುವುದು ಸಾಮಾನ್ಯವಾಗಿ ಕಂಡುಬಂತು.

ಆರ್ಮಿ ಪಬ್ಲಿಕ್ ಸ್ಕೂಲ್ ಕೇಂದ್ರದಲ್ಲಿ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆ ಬರೆಯಲು ಆಗಮಿಸಿದ್ದ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿನಿಯೊಬ್ಬರು ಓಲೆ ಧರಿಸಿದ್ದರು. ಓಲೆ ತಗೆದು ಕೇಂದ್ರದೊಳಗೆ ಬರುವಂತೆ ಸಿಬ್ಬಂದಿಗಳು ಸೂಚಿಸಿದರು. ಆದರೆ ಓಲೆ ತಗೆಯಲು ಸಾಧ್ಯವಾಗಲಿಲ್ಲ. ಅಂತಿಮವಾಗಿ ಆಭರಣದಂಗಡಿಗೆ ಹೋಗಿ ಓಲೆ ಬಿಚ್ಚಿಸಿದ ಬಳಿಕ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆ ಬರೆಯಲು ಅವಕಾಶ ನೀಡಲಾಯಿತು.