

Protagonist (me): *Anisha Budhiraj, Dental Surgeon, New Delhi, India*

Other Player: *Dr. Sameer Sharma: Prosthodontist, New Delhi, India*

- 1. The challenge or theme illustrated by this episode:** The challenge experienced was the convention of strict hierarchy which is frequently encountered in a medical practice. There was a problem of ego and perceived insubordination that was clouding a dentist's professional judgment.
- 2. Brief statement of context:** Dr. Anisha works for Dr. Sameer Sharma, MDS who has a flourishing private dental practice in one of the prime locations of New Delhi. He is well known and caters to primarily the high society in the city. He is not particularly kind to the middle or lower class patients in general.

In this instance, when a military veteran came over for a check-up because of acute pain, Dr. Sharma correctly diagnosed a deep carious lesion penetrating the pulp and advised him to get a root canal treatment done. He provided the treatment and gave the patient a temporary restoration but didn't advise him to come back a week later for a permanent restoration.

Consequently, the tooth got reinfected and the patient came back in acute pain. The dentist merely cleaned it up. Obviously, in a short while it got infected again, and the cycle went on for quite some time before Dr. Sharma refused to see him and labeled him a 'whiny' patient.

3. The conversation

| <u>My Thoughts and Feelings</u> | <u>What We Said</u> |
|--|--|
| | FIRST DAY |
| | <i>Dr. Sharma:</i> You can see this whiny patient. |
| That was so denigrating for the patient. How can he be so cold? | <i>Anisha:</i> Yes Sir. What is the problem? |
| | |
| | <i>Dr. Sharma:</i> Nothing at all. He just keeps complaining for no reason. Just spend a couple of minutes on him and send him off. |
| He just wants me to send the patient off but just because he isn't concerned for the patient doesn't mean the patient doesn't deserve good care. | <i>Anisha:</i> I shall look into the case. <i>(The patient is provided proper treatment & care and is advised to return a week later for permanent restoration)</i> |
| | |
| | ONE WEEK LATER- The patient insists on getting treatment done by Anisha |
| | |
| | <i>Dr. Sharma:</i> When are you taking a day off? |
| Why is he asking me that? He never lets me take a day off? Is something wrong? | <i>Anisha:</i> Friday, Sir. |
| | |
| | <i>Dr. Sharma:</i> You shall not see this patient |

| | |
|---|--|
| | anymore. Ask Megha, the secretary to schedule the patient for Friday morning. |
| Why shouldn't I be allowed to see the patient? He seems to feel confident in my skills. I know I can relieve him off his pain. | <i>Anisha:</i> He needs a permanent restoration. I could do that. He would be fine after that. |
| | |
| | <i>Dr. Sharma:</i> Stay out of this. I intend to extract his tooth. |
| Should I tell the patient? I am torn between my moral responsibility towards the patient and the need to obey my boss. He is paying me and it is his practice eventually. | <i>Anisha:</i> Yes, Sir. <i>(Soon thereafter Dr. Anisha is fired)</i> |

- 4. Lingering concerns, puzzles, or questions:** Isn't a dentist or any medical professional morally responsible for all his patients? Isn't he supposed to hold himself or herself to the highest moral & ethical standards? How can professionals not doing so become as successful as Dr. Sharma? Even after achieving such success, how could Dr. Sharma be so insecure as to feel threatened by me? If I was considered a good dentist, wasn't that to the benefit of his dental practice?