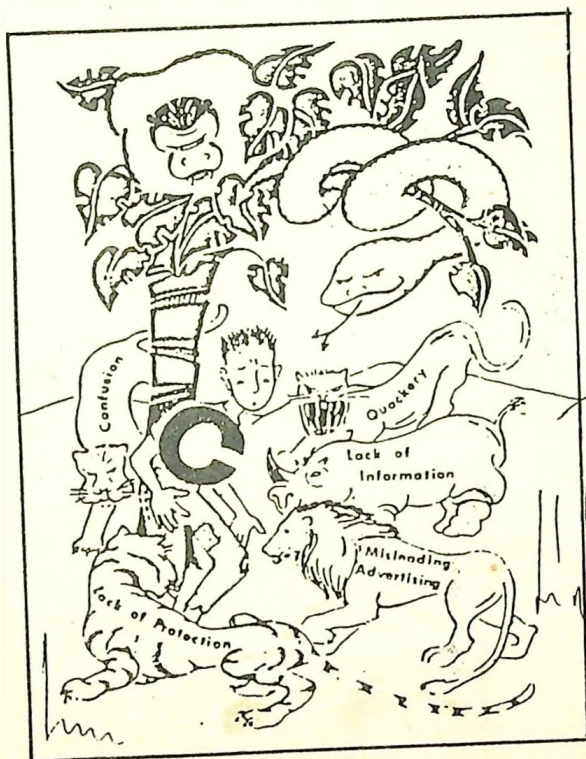


HEALTH
ACTION
SERIES-3

MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE



ISSUES BEFORE THE PUBLIC



VOLUNTARY HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE

... ISSUES BEFORE THE PUBLIC



Voluntary Health Association of India.

40, Institutional Area, South of I.I.T., (Near Qutab Hotel),
New Delhi - 110 016 Ph. : 668071, 668072, 665018, 655871, 652953

The information contained in this book is compiled from various sources and every effort has been made to ensure its accuracy. However, we cannot take responsibility for any error or omissions made due to our having to depend on secondary sources also. It is extremely difficult to obtain authentic information easily from reliable sources and if there are any omissions it merely highlights the urgency and the need to ensure easy availability of unbiased information from official sources.

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40, Institutional Area
South of IIT
New Delhi 110016
Phone : 668071, 668072, 665018, 655871, 652953

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COMMUNITY HEALTH CELA
326, V Main, I Block
Koramangala
Bangalore-560034
India

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For "Salient Features of Consumer Protection Act, 1986" we have depended heavily on 'Consumer and their Rights' authored by T.Chacko and G.N. Khanna, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi.

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New Delhi

October, 1992

Dr. Unnikrishnan P.V.

Ms. Rama V. Baru

THE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT (CPA), 1986

The issue of consumer rights has become an important issue during the last couple of years. In 1989, for the first time in India, the Consumer Protection Act (CPA), 1986, provided consumers a forum for speedy redressal of their grievances ranging from defective household appliances to medical services. The CPA is a piece of comprehensive legislation and recognises six rights of the consumer, namely:

- Right to Safety;
- Right to be informed;
- Right to choose;
- Right to be heard;
- Right to seek redressal; and
- Right to consumer education.

Consumers with complaints can approach commissions at the district, state and central levels. There are no court fees and the consumer does not have to go through lawyers.

Nearly 50,000 cases have already been taken to these courts and it is heartening to note that over eighty percent of the cases have been decided in favour of the consumers. Recent rulings in two cases filed against the Cosmopolitan Hospital in Kerala has brought medical services in the private sector within the ambit of CPA. The Kerala State Commission awarded damages to the complaints rejecting the hospital's argument that consumer courts were not authorised to punish by law, complaints of poor medical services.

ON APRIL 21, THE NATIONAL COMMISSION UPHELD THE KERALA COMMISSION'S JUDGEMENT WHICH SPECIFICALLY STATED THAT MEDICAL SERVICES WERE COVERED BY THE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT.

It pointed out that, in the Act "service" is defined as one of any description made available to potential users with the exception of service rendered free of charge or under a contract of personal service. Medical treatment involves a contract for personal service, not one of personal services, which is excluded under the CPA. The latter implies a relationship of master and servant while the former is an offer of technical services for a fee.

Hon'ble Mr. Justice V. Balakrishna Eradi, President of the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission in his judgement said:

".....the activity of providing medical assistance for payment carried on by hospitals and members of the medical profession

falls within the scope of the expression "service as defined in section 2 (1)(0) of the Act and that in the event of ny deficiency in the performance of such service the aggrieved party can invoke the remedies provided under the Act by filing a complaint before the Consumer Forum having jurisdiction."

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT, 1986

Complaint

Q. What constitutes a complaint?

Under the Act, a complaint means any allegation in writing made by a complainant in regard to one or more of the following:

- That he has suffered loss or damage as a result of any unfair trade practices adopted by any trader.
- That the goods mentioned in the complaint suffer from one or more defects.
- That services mentioned in the complaint suffer from deficiencies in any respect.
- That a trader has charged for the goods mentioned in the complaint a price in excess of the price :
 1. Fixed by or under any law for the time being in force;
 2. Displayed on goods; or
 3. Displayed on any packet containing such goods.

Consumer Reliefs

Q. What are the reliefs available to consumers?

Depending on the facts and the nature of relief sought by the consumer, the Redressal Forums may give orders for one or more of the following reliefs:

- a. removal of defects from the goods,
- b. replacement of the goods,
- c. refund of the price paid, or
- d. award of compensation for the loss or injury suffered.

There is no fee for filing appeal before the State Commission or the National Commission.

Procedure for filing an appeal is the same as that of complaint, except that the application should be accompanied by the orders of the District Forum/State Commission as the case may be. Reasons for filing the appeal should be specified.

Consumer Protection Councils and Consumer Disputes Agencies

Q. Which is the apex-body which safeguards the rights of the consumer?

The Central Consumer Protection Council is the highest body which safeguards the rights of the consumers. It consists of the minister incharge of the Department of Food and Civil Supplies of the Government of India as its chairman, and such number of other official and non-official members representing such interests as may be prescribed.

Q. What are objects of the Central Consumer Protection Council (CCPC)?

The objects of the Council are the following:

The Council is expected to promote and protect the rights of consumers, such as the right to be protected against marketing goods which are hazardous to life and property.

- The right to be informed about the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods.
- The right to be assured access to a variety of goods at competitive prices.
- The right to be heard at appropriate Forums.
- The right to seek redressal against unfair trade practices or unscrupulous exploitation of consumers.
- The right to consumer education.

Q. Is there any such body in the states?

Yes. On the same pattern and with the same objectives, a consumer protection council at the State level is also envisaged. It may come into existence by a notification issued by the State Government. It may consist of such number of members as may be specified by the State Government by notification from time to time.

Q. What are the consumer dispute redressal agencies and how do they function

The Act envisages a three tier scheme for the redressal of consumer disputes.

1. District Forum

There is a Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum known as District Forum established by the State Government.

It consists of three persons:

- a. a person who is or has been or is qualified to be a District Judge nominated by State Government as its President.
- b. a person of eminence in the field of education, trade or commerce.
- c. a lady social worker.

Its Jurisdiction:

The District Forum has jurisdiction to entertain complaints where the value of goods or service and the compensation if any, claimed is less than rupees one lakh.

A complaint has to be instituted in the District Forum within whose local jurisdiction:

- a. The opposite party or each of the opposite parties resides or carries on business at the time of the institution of the complaint, or
- b. If anyone of the opposite parties does not live within the jurisdiction of the District Forum, then either the permission of the District Forum is to be obtained or the non-resident parties agree to the institution of the complaint in the said Forum.
- c. The cause of action, wholly or in part, arises.

Procedure on Receipt of Complaints: (Section 13)

- a. The District Forum sends a copy of the complaint to the opposite party directing him to give his version of the case within thirty days. An extension of 15 days may be granted.
- b. If the opposite party disputes the allegations made in the complaint the District Forum takes appropriate steps, such as:
 - I. Sending a sample of the defective goods obtained from the complainant for laboratory test or analysis. Before the sample is sent for analysis or test the District Forum may ask the complainant to deposit a certain amount of money to meet the laboratory expenses.
 - II. Forwarding a copy of the laboratory report to the opposite party.
 - III. If any of the parties disputes the correctness of the findings, asking the disputant to submit its objections in writing. After having heard both the parties the District Forum makes appropriate orders.
- c. If the complaint is with regard to any services or with regard to goods in respect of which the procedure specified above cannot be followed, then the District Forum forwards a copy of the complaint to the opposite party who has to respond to it within 30 days. A 15 days extension may be granted.

If the opposite party denies or disputes the allegations or fails to respond within the given time, the District Forum proceeds to settle the matter on the strength of the available evidence.

- d. The District Forum has power:
 - I. to summon any defendant or witness and to examine the witness on oath;
 - II. to discover and produce any document or other material object producible as evidence;
 - III. to receive evidence or affidavits;
 - IV. to requisition the report of the laboratory test analysis;
 - V. to appoint any commission for the examination of any witness, etc.

Finding of the District Forum:

If the District Forum is satisfied that the allegations contained in the complaint about goods or services are proved, it shall

issue an order to the opposite party to take one or more of the following steps, namely:

- a. to remove the defect pointed out by the appropriate laboratory from the goods in question;
- b. to replace the goods with new goods of similar description which shall be free from any defect;
- c. to return to the complainant the price, or as the case may be, the charges paid by the complainant;
- d. to pay such amount as may be awarded by it as compensation to the consumer for any loss or injury suffered by the consumer due to the negligence of the opposite party.

Appeal: Any person aggrieved by an order of the District Forum may appeal against such order to the State Commission within a period of 30 days from the date of the order.

II. The State Commission

It consists of three persons:

- a. A person who is or has been a judge of the High Court, appointed by the State Government, as its President,
- b. Two other persons, one of who shall be a woman, who are known for their ability, integrity and knowledge of economics law, commerce, accountancy, industry or administration.

Its Jurisdiction

- I. To entertain complaints where the value of the goods or services and compensation, if any, claimed exceeds rupees one lakh, up to ten lakhs.
- II. To entertain appeals against the orders of any District Forum within the State.
- III. To call for the records and pass appropriate orders in any consumer dispute which is pending before or has been decided by any District Forum has failed to exercise its jurisdiction properly.

Procedure: The State Commission follows the same procedure as that of the District Forum.

Appeal: An appeal against the order of the State Commission can be preferred to the National Commission within 30 days of the order issued by the State Commission.

III. National Commission

It consists of five members:

- a. A person who is or has been a judge of the Supreme Court, appointed by the Central Government as its President.
- b. Four other members, one of whom shall be a woman, who are persons known for their ability, integrity and knowledge of economics, commerce, law, industry, public affairs or administration.

Its Jurisdiction:

It has power:

- a. to entertain complaints where the value of goods or services and compensation, if any, claimed exceeds rupees ten lakhs;
- b. to entertain appeal against the order of the State Commission;
- c. to call for the records and pass appropriate orders in any consumer dispute which is pending before or has been decided by any State Commission where it appears to the National Commission that such State Commission has exercised a jurisdiction not vested in it by law, or has failed to exercise a jurisdiction as vested or has acted in the exercise of its jurisdiction illegally or with material irregularity.

Procedure Applicable to the National Commission:

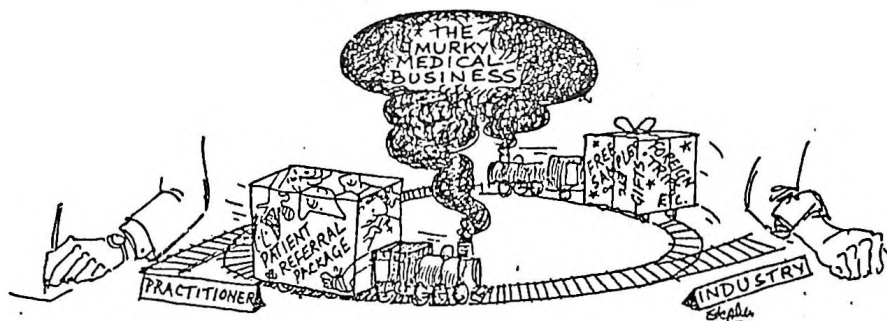
The National Commission has the power of a civil court as specified in sub section (4) and (5) of section 13 and follows such procedure as may be prescribed by the Central Government (see Section 13 (d) above)

Appeal: An appeal against the order of the National Commission may be preferred to the Supreme Court within a period of 30 days.

MEDICAL SERVICES AND THE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

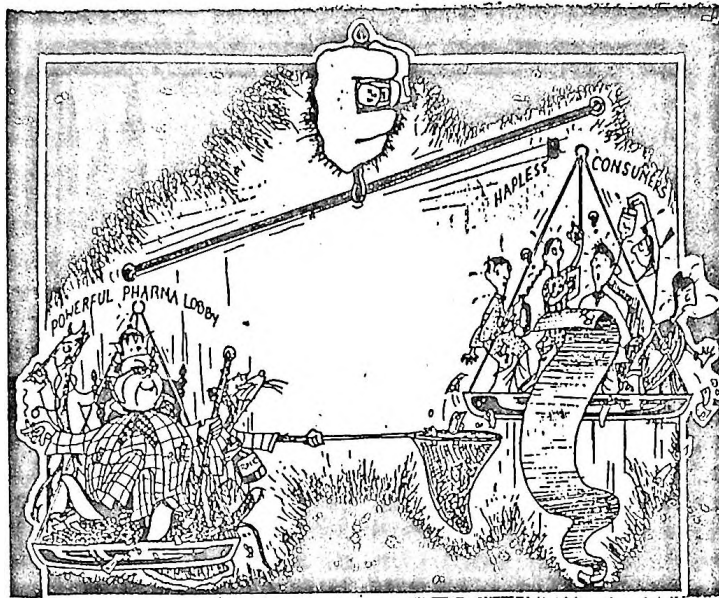
The inclusion of medical services under the purview of the Consumer Protection Act (CPA) has opened up a major controversy between the professionals and patients. While this issue is being debated, it is important to look at why people are claiming damages for medical negligence. The reasons are rooted in the present state of medical services in the country. While the fifties and sixties was the period of growth for public services, during the sixties and seventies investments have not increased very much. This has had a negative impact on the quality of services in government hospitals and at the same time has provided the space for the growth of private nursing homes and hospitals.

The increase in private nursing homes and hospitals has converted medical care which is a 'need' into a commodity, which can be purchased over the counter. Like any other business, the medical profession is increasingly being guided by the profit motive rather than that of service. Such a situation gives rise to unethical practices and there have been a number of cases, both reported and unreported, of misdiagnosis, unnecessary testing and surgeries from different parts of the country.



"Private practice has become extremely commercial. There is no attempt to check the rampant cut practice (Commissions doctors pay one another for referrals) and expensive investigations like CT Scans ordered without sufficient indications" says DR. SANJAY NAGRAL., DEPT. OF SURGERY, KEM HOSPITAL, BOMBAY.

This kind of a trend has been well documented in the case of the pharmaceutical industry which is known to persuade doctors to prescribe certain types of drugs by offering commissions, concessions and fancy gifts in the form of household luxuries to trips abroad. Some of these drugs are not only irrational but also extremely hazardous. Drugs banned in other parts of the world still remain in third world countries like India.



DEADLY NEGLIGENCE ?

"My father spent one month in hospital. Specialists used to visit him daily and told us it was nothing serious. We got the first indication of his real situation just two hours before his death. Out of the blue, the doctor told us that medical science could do nothing more for my father. The other specialist refused to come and visit him on his deathbed, saying he didn't work on Sundays. What's so special about such doctors", recalls an aggrieved son.

This is not an isolated case...it is just a tip of the iceberg. People have died or have been crippled due to medical negligence. Reports of such cases throws light on the seriousness of the matter. Less said the better about the number of cases which go unreported



CASE OF G.P. NAIR, COSMOPOLITAN HOSPITALS, TIRUVANANTHAPURAM (Vasantha Nair Vs Cosmopolitan Hospital)

Mr. G.P.Nair was a company executive in the service of the Aluminium Industries Ltd. in Thiruvananthapuram. He was admitted to Cosmopolitan Hospital, a private hospital, with persistent back ache. He was attended by a retired Professor of the Medical College, who was also a Senior Consultant in Orthopaedics in the

hospital. The consultant diagnosed his ailment as tuberculosis and started treatment for it. During the course of treatment, Mr. Nair exhibited other symptoms, which was diagnosed as Jaundice. Immediately he was transferred to another physician for treatment. As his condition worsened, he was transferred to the Gastro Enterology Department of the Medical College since better facilities for diagnosis and treatment were available. While undergoing treatment at the Medical College Hospital he died. His widow, Vasantha P. Nair, filed a complaint of negligence against Cosmopolitan Hospital (P) Ltd.

THE KERALA STATE COMMISSION AWARDED DAMAGES TO THE COMPLAINANTS. HOWEVER THE COSMOPOLITAN HOSPITAL CHALLENGED THIS VERDICT AND APPEALED BEFORE THE NATIONAL COMMISSION. THE NATIONAL COMMISSION UPHELD THE KERALA COMMISSION'S JUDGEMENT STATING SPECIFICALLY THAT MEDICAL SERVICES WERE COVERED BY CPA.

CASE OF MR. SHAH, BOMBAY HOSPITAL TRUST

Mr. A.K. Shah was admitted to the Bombay Hospital during August 1991 for an operation of his hip. After the operation, Mr. Shah did not regain consciousness till late evening. He had bled continuously after the operation till his death at 5.30 a.m. the next day. According to his wife, the hospital did not give any treatment to stop the bleeding, nor were the relatives of the patient warned in advance about the likelihood for any emergency need for blood. Although a notice was served under Section B of the CPA on the Bombay Hospital Trust and subsequently were summoned to appear before the Commission, they chose to absent themselves.

Relying on the Code of Medical Ethics and other authorities, the Commission came to a conclusion that the hospital was guilty of negligence and carelessness in causing the death of Arvind Kumar Shah. THE COMMISSION DIRECTED THE BOMBAY HOSPITAL TO PAY THE COMPLAINANT RS. 7 LAKHS TOWARDS COMPENSATION.

(Based on a Report in Indian Express, 15 July 1992).

IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT DOCTORS IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE ALSO PRACTICE PRIVATELY. SEVERAL OF THEM ARE KNOWN TO ACT AS CONSULTANTS IN PRIVATE NURSING HOMES ACROSS SEVERAL STATES.

The case of 76 year old Mr. K.N. Joshi not only exposes the negligence on the part of the doctor who attended on him but the nexus between the doctor in government service and the private nursing homes.

CASE OF MR. K.N. JOSHI, DELHI

Mr. K.N. Joshi was operated by Dr. Neelam Kaul, who is employed at Delhi Administration's Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital. Dr. Kaul has been running a private eye clinic at Mayur Vihar, Delhi which was illegal since doctors employed by the Administration are not allowed to practice privately. In January this year, Dr. Kaul had advised the surgical removal of the cataract and

COMMUNITY HEALTH CELL

326, V Main, 1 Block

Koramangala

Bangalore-560034

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operated on the patient's left eye at a Nursing Home in Mayur Vihar, Delhi. When the bandage was removed the next day, the patient could not see. According to the representation, Dr. Kaul reassured him that his vision would return and proceeded to operate on the other eye as well. The following day she discovered that Mr. Joshi had developed an infection in both eyes and took him to a senior private ophthalmic surgeon at Shakti Nagar, Delhi, who advised her to admit him into a nursing home and put him on intravenous drugs for four days to cure the infection.

After a few weeks Mr. Joshi still could not see, his family took him to the Rajendra Prasad Centre for Ophthalmological Science at All India Institute of Medical Sciences, where the doctors declared him blind.

The family has represented the case to the State Consumer Disputes Redressal Council seeking Rs.9 lakhs as compensation. Meanwhile Dr. Neelam Kaul remained unavailable for comments.

(Based on a report in Indian Express, 19 June 1992).

Professional bodies like the Indian Medical Association (IMA) and the Medical Council of India (MCI) have not addressed themselves to the issues of commercialisation of medical care, decline in medical ethics and accountability.

MR. JUSTICE V.R. KRISHNA IYER writes that "No profession is above the law. Even Judges cannot be lawless in the exercise of power....The Indian Medical Council Act does not provide for liabilities of doctors to victims of negligence or malpractice. The prosecution for offences committed by doctors in the course of their practice and the liability in tort of doctors when they commit culpable negligence or fraud or other delinquent disregard of due care is also not taken away. In spite of the Consumer Protection Act, it is open to a party aggrieved to sue in the Civil Court or prosecute in the Criminal Court.

IN SHORT, THE CONSUMERS PROTECTION ACT PROVIDES FOR AN ALTERNATIVE, EASIER SPEEDY REMEDY FOR THE CONSUMER

DR. Arun BAL, A Practising Surgeon in a Bombay hospital and President Of Association For Consumer Action On Safety And Health (ACASH), Bombay says, "Doctors themselves are to be blamed for the turn of events because they have failed to exercise self regulation. In the last two decades there has been a phenomenal rise in malpractice. overcharging, unnecessary tests, referrals and operations have increased beyond limits. What are patients to do? They have to seek redressal. Already, there is a patients' Association formed which is urging patients' relatives to file complaints against erring doctors. Unless doctors enforce self regulation, the situation will get out of hand".

HOW DO THE PROFESSIONAL BODIES REACT?

THE INDIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (IMA) feels that, ".....Doctors will be compelled to adopt defensive or protective practices, avoid serious cases investigate extensively and seek multiple consultations to reduce any chance of error. Further doctors may protect themselves by taking heavy insurance. But all these steps will make treatment very costly and affect the middle class and the poor adversely.....".

".....Friends, it is time for all shades of doctors to unite under the Indian Medical Association and strengthen its hands to fight for the dignity of the profession and for all right to practice medicine, treat patients without any threat of harrassment of legal action.....". "EDITORIAL, INDIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION NEWS, APRIL 1992"

DR. SAROJ TASKAR, PRESIDENT, IMA (BOMBAY BRANCH) took a slightly different position. In an interview to the Illustrated Weekly DR. SAROJ TASKAR said, "Doctors are not above the law. There should be some mechanism to punish guilty doctors, and give some compensation to the patients who have suffered".

DR. ARUN BAL, a practising surgeon in a Bombay Hospital and also the President of ASSOCIATION FOR CONSUMER ACTION ON SAFETY AND HEALTH (ACASH) feels that "The IMA is trying to create a panic among doctors, telling them that they will be harrassed,.... The fact is that the Indian Medical Council, the only disciplinary body for the medical profession, has done nothing to stop malpractices in the last 20 years".

DR. AMAR JESSANI OF MEDICO FRIEND CIRCLE, says that: "Corruption and vested interests ensure that most doctors are let off with just a warning".

DO PATIENTS HAVE ANY OTHER FORUM FOR REDRESSAL?

The MEDICAL COUNCIL OF INDIA is a statutory body with an all India jurisdiction. The State Medical Councils are responsible for regulating medical practices among doctors registered with them. Each State has their own Medical Council Act of that State. But this Council is often constituted by "fellow colleagues" of the "accused doctors" as a result of which it takes a long time to take up cases.

MOREOVER THE MEDICAL COUNCIL ACT HAS NO PROVISION FOR COMPENSATION

JUSTICE V.R. KRISHNA IYER writes "It is a pity that never or rarely in the history of the Indian Medical Councils Act has punitive action been taken against peers. Nor can compensation and criminal sentence be awarded by such bodies, even where guilt is found".

DR, N.N. COLABAWALLA, a practising Urologist, in a Bombay hospital opines that "in the question of negligent or unethical practice, the medical councils and courts have different functions. The former are addressed to the medical profession and are meant to enforce medical ethics, punishing erring doctors - essentially a self-regulatory mechanism. The courts offer legal redressal and compensation in civil cases. The consumer commissions are basically a short-circuiting of the tedious process of the legal system. I personally feel the consumer courts are better than the civil and criminal courts - quicker and cheaper".



DR. ARUN BAL, a practising surgeon and President of ACASH says:

"But the fact is that Indian Medical Council, the only disciplinary body for the medical profession, has done nothing to stop malpractices in the last 20 years. It has used political pressure to get private medical colleges recognition".

The other legal avenues like Civil Courts and Criminal Courts take years and often decades to resolve cases. Under these circumstances, the Consumer Redressal Commissions is the only alternative for the patient for a speedy redressal of their grievances under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

In the absence of a public debate among professionals, consumers and policy makers to address these issues, the consumers who are being subjected to negligence and mis diagnosis have sought to redress their grievances under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. "If doctors and hospitals can treat their work like a business, patients are justified in acting like consumers" says Dr Arun Bal of ACASH.

There has been wide press coverage of medical services being included under the Consumer Protection Act and the impression that is conveyed by most of these reports in one of confrontation between doctors and patients. It is counterproductive to pose this issue as a confrontation between the medical profession and the public because the issue of medical ethics in medical practice is as important for the future of the profession as it is for consumers. Therefore we feel it is very important to persuade people who are concerned about the future of medical

care in this country to rally together to widen the scope of this debate. We urge professionals, policy makers, activists, peoples science movements, voluntary organisations, consumer action groups, academicians, media persons and all other concerned citizens to familiarise themselves with this issue and take this debate forward.

REDRESSAL OF CONSUMER GRIEVANCES

DO YOU FEEL?

- * As a result of any unfair trade practice adopted by any trader, you have suffered loss or damage;
- * The goods purchased by you suffer from any defect;
- * The services in respect of the goods purchased by you suffer from deficiency in any respect;
- * A trader has charged for the goods in price in excess of the price fixed by or under any law for the time being in force or displayed on the goods or any package containing such goods.

DO YOU KNOW?

YOU HAVE A RIGHT OF REDRESSAL OF YOUR GRIEVANCES

WHOM TO APPROACH

- * You may make complaint in writing to the following Forums set up by Delhi Administration for redressal of Consumer Grievances.
- * You are not required to pay any court fees or engage a counsel to present your cause before these Forums. You may present your case yourself.

If loss suffered is:	Name of the Forum:	Jurisdiction:
Below Rs. One lac.	1. President, District Forum-1, Room No. 158, Western Wing, 1st Floor, Tis Hazari, Delhi-54.	Cases pertaining to Territorial jurisdiction of Police Stations, falling within North, North-East, Central & North-West Police Districts.
	2. President, District Forum-II, C-22/23, Udyog Sadan, Institutional Area, Behind Qutab Hotel, Mehrauli, New Delhi-16.	Cases pertaining to Territorial jurisdiction of Police Stations falling within the West, South-West, South & New Delhi Police Districts.
Rs. One lac to Rs. Ten lacs.	President, State Commission, Room No. 2 & 3, Old Civil Supplies Building, Tis Hazari, Delhi-54.	

NOTE: You may prefer an appeal before the State Commission against the orders passed by the District Forums.

Directorate of Consumer Affairs, Delhi
Administration, 2-Under Hill Road, Delhi.

SOME USEFUL ADDRESSES

1. National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission
Janpath Bhavan
5th Floor, 'A' Wing
New Delhi-110 001.
Tel: 3317690

2. Association for Consumer Action on
Safety and Health (ACASH)
Lawyers Chambers, Room No. 21
R.S. Sapre Marg
Bombay-400 002.

Tel: 257267
3. Confederation of Indian Consumer
Organisation (CICO)
c/o Indian Social Institute
10, Lodi Road
New Delhi-110 003.

Tel: 4622379
4. Medico Friends Circle
c/o Dr. Amar Jessani
K-8, Nensey Colony Express Highway
Borivli (East)
Bombay-400 066
5. Consumer Education and Research Centre (CERC)
Thakorebhai Desai Smarak Bhavan
Near Law College
Ellis bridge
Ahmedabad-380 006.

Tel: 448833
6. Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS)
3-B, Camac Street
Calcutta-700 016.

Tel: 33297391
7. Mr. H.D. Shourie
Director
Common Cause
A, 31 West End
New Delhi-110 021

Tel: 671666
8. Voluntary Health Association of India
40, Institutional Area
Near Qutab Hotel
New Delhi-110 016

Tel: 668071/2

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The Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI) is a secular, non-profit federation of over 3000 organisations working in the field of health and community development. VHAI strives to make health a reality for all, especially the unreached and the oppressed.

VHAI fulfils these objectives primarily through training and by providing information to the target groups. In support of its objectives, VHAI also develops and distributes appropriate educational aids to the organisations serving at the grassroots. Linking up these organisations through its newsletters and journals also constitutes an important activity of VHAI.

VHAI researches into and campaigns on relevant and important health issues to ensure that a people-oriented health policy is brought about and effectively implemented. VHAI also works to sensitise the large public towards a scientific attitude to health.



Voluntary Health Association of India

Tong Swasthya Bhavan

40, Institutional Area, Near Qutab Hotel

New Delhi 110 016, INDIA

Phones: 652953, 655871, 665018, 668071, 668072