

Editorial

Can Good Medicine Come Cheap?

In the good old days though life style was much different between the haves and have-nots, both at the individual level as well as at the international level, however, there wasn't much difference between the effectiveness of care people got. The ceremonious servings of complex brews and concoctions by royal physicians in gold-wares made the kings better in a week, while good old granny's broth in an earthenware made you well in seven days!

Modern medicine and high tech diagnostics have now built mountains separating the haves and have-nots round the globe. If one is seriously ill in the present age, it is now true to say that the quality of workup he will receive is directly proportional to what he can afford to buy. The same goes for treatment and drugs. The newer and more effective the drug, the more expensive it is.

What should we in the third world do about it? Fortunately, most illnesses in the world are non-lethal and self limiting and get better whether you are rich or poor, take medicine or not. However, for the still large numbers needing a more sophisticated workup followed by prolonged and/or expensive therapy, there are no easy answers. Not only this, but, the answers are getting harder each year as high tech. keeps taking the developed countries ahead, further widening the large gulf already present.

Do we give up in despair? Certainly not! What we need to do is firstly to get hold of ourselves and rid ourselves of the awe surrounding high tech. We must thoroughly familiarize ourselves with the newer techniques and technologies. Once this happens you suddenly become aware of the incredible wastage and lack of cost-effectiveness of most high tech as is being applied in modern medicine in the developed countries. Not only is it wasteful and therefore immoral, it is bad medicine. We must not, however, throw away the baby with the bath water. We must therefore learn to pick and choose only that new development or drug that has stood the test of time and proven its cost effectiveness.

It sounds easy enough but it is not so. To whet down awesome new technology and so called "wonder" drugs needs a lot of home work and hard work. Maybe good medicine comes cheap but is certainly doesn't come without effort!

Editor.