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Combining touch with technique: Fusing technology with the art of medicine

It does not take long walking through a modern hospital to appreciate how much the practice of medicine is influenced by advanced technology that impacts diagnosis and treatment as well as greatly enhancing overall patient outcomes. This technology has allowed us to increase diagnostic efficiency and accuracy as well as managing complex illnesses. However, these advances in diagnosis and medical/surgical management have sometimes led to a sacrifice in the patient-doctor relationship that has impeded patient's perception of personal interaction and care leading to a climate of distance and distrust. Ultimately, if a patient is diagnosed correctly with minimal care and compassion, have we truly met our responsibilities as physicians? Lacking in the current teaching of medicine is often an explicit discussion of the importance of touch as a therapeutic modality rather than just a consequence of a thorough physical examination. Allopathic medicine would do well to incorporate the basic principles of osteopathic medicine's emphasis on touch in the everyday practice of medicine. Physicians can provide compassionate care only when empathy is present, which is reinforced by direct contact with patients. Technology should be used to supplement, not replace, the physician-patient relationship. The great challenge in medicine is not in the learning of our professional skills, rather it is in its competent and compassionate administration within the confines of the modern medical world. Within the constant spectre of disease and its complications, our central role as physicians is to blend the technology to diagnose and treat with the compassion and imperative to relieve suffering and by doing so, adding to the joy of life.

Biography

James Oleske is the François-Xavier Bagnoud Professor of Pediatrics at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Newark, NJ and the Director Division of Pediatric Allergy and Immunology and Infectious Diseases. He has graduated from the College of Medicine and Dentistry of NJ and received a MPH from Columbia University. He has completed a Pediatric Residency and a Fellowship in Ambulatory Pediatrics at the Harrison S Martland Hospital in Newark, NJ and a National Cancer Institute fellowship at Emory University and CDC, Atlanta, GA. He is board certified in Pediatrics, Allergy and Immunology, Pediatric Infectious Diseases, Pain Management, Hospice and Palliative Care.

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