So you want to be a doctor?

By a Headmistress

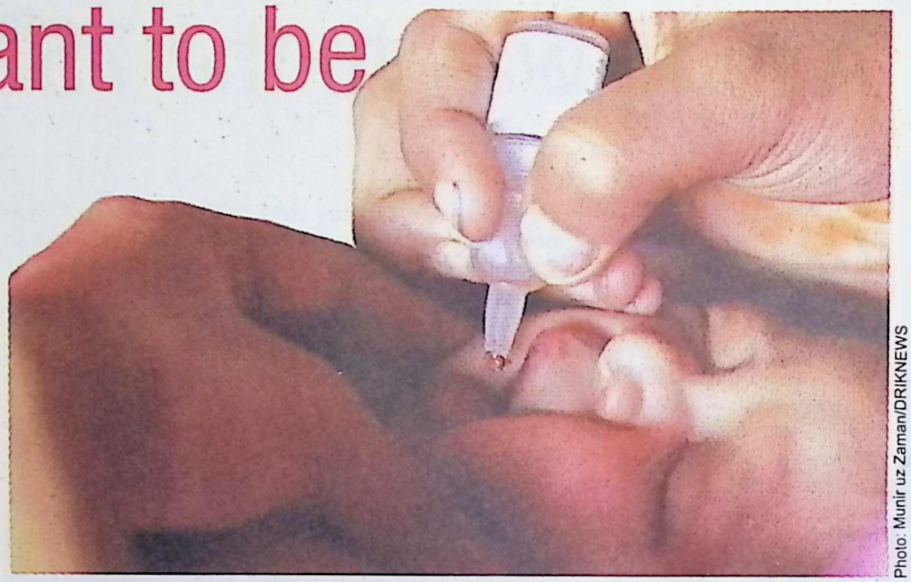


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The article by Mahdin Mahboob (http://thedailystar.net/campus/2008/11/01/camspotlight.htm) on the whole issue of public health and the need for proper education in it - and the beginnings of just that! - was excellent but is there anyone out there who could take this whole business a step further?

I believe that we need the funding for a leaflet called 'So you want to be a doctor'. This must then be put into the hands of hundreds of young people whose parents are pushing them into that profession and, as far as I can see, they do not really understand what it means, have no true calling to do the job and, if they have, they have no idea of *alternative* fields of service in health care.

Moreover, I have marked many essays on such topics as 'What career do you think would be most satisfying?' which have professed the desire to be doctor but not mentioned a single thing about the actual work of a doctor but focus entirely on the respect that would be due to them if only they were doctors! So, it seems, the desire of many students to be a doctor is for the status gained by such a qualification. Considering that no one can be a real doctor without a genuine passion for helping and caring for people, this is doubtlessly the reason why some doctors are shockingly uncaring, why (according to The Daily Star some months ago) 72% of doctors do not spend the hours they should in a government hospital (because they go off to their private clinics instead) and why a large number of patients who can afford it, go to other countries for treatment, especially for diagnosis.

If they DO have a calling to help and care for people and are good at science, how much better it would be if, instead of going to medical school, students were aware of the *huge* gaps in *other* parts of the field of health which need their skill, enthusiasm and commitment and in which women as well as men can make a special contribution.

There is the whole field of public health - acres of it! There is also the wonderful work done for the injured and handicapped that the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) is doing by training people to be physiotherapists and occupational therapists. (When I last heard, 14 of only 17 occupational therapists in Bangladesh were trained by CRP!) These are essential back-up services to get scores of people back to work when, for instance, they have been in a road accident or broken their backs falling out of a tree while picking fruit. (CRP has pioneered the skills needed once people start caring that such people can have a life and a job again. Wonderful work!)

Then what about speech therapists? Have you, dear reader, ANY idea how many children do not speak maybe as some mysterious part of their survival kit? I think, also, of the huge search I had to find ONE competent and willing psychologist who could cope with childhood eating disorders - in the whole of Bangladesh! Have you ANY idea of the number of children who do not eat properly - deliberately? What about the whole neglected field of educational psychology? Have you ANY idea how many children have difficulties that need investigation with the help of such a person? I think of the Adolescent Health Care Department of a prestigious hospital that, when I last heard (from a despairing school Head who had sent one of his youngsters along) does not have a *single* properly trained educational psychologist on its team!

