

Secularism and Medicine

Medical Professionals and Religion

Medical professionals are seriously failing to do their job if they:

Send for a priest or clergyman for a dying person unless asked.

Recite the Act of Contrition into a dying person's ear.

Pray over a person without asking.

Praying even if asked - the professional must stay within scientific boundaries and not be practicing superstition in his or her profession.

Tell a person that prayer or God or a healer will heal or help them. That for example discriminates against those who find that praying or putting false hope in a healer makes them feel no better and sometimes worse.

Give religious literature. Gideon Bibles must be removed from hospitals.

Discriminate against LGBT staff or patients or discriminate on religious grounds.

Secularism and health services

There should be legislation to prevent hospitals and clinics from having a religious ethos. A religious ethos would be like, "To promote and live the teachings of Christianity". A Church should be allowed to run a hospital that has a broader ethos such as, "To promote the dignity and wellbeing of the patient." That is a neutral ethos. There is no need for a religious ethos. Where it exists, it is a privilege not a right.

A hospital that displays statues of Catholic saints is not welcoming enough for atheists and Protestants and Muslims. A proper welcome involves getting rid of them - the Catholic faith does not require that statues be displayed. And even if it did then tough!

Doctors refusing to give contraceptive advice on the grounds of their personal religious beliefs has to be outlawed. If they are going to neglect their responsibility as doctors they should not have become doctors in the first place. The patient has come before religious opinions. Secular views of right and wrong are what everybody can agree with provided they have the facts and they are what secular institutions should follow. Religion wants control of everything and that is why it is better for a doctor to give up religion.

Prayer and Criminal Neglect

Some religionists refuse to get the doctor for friends and family and if they die, they deny they neglected them on the basis that they tried to cure them with prayer.

Some legal systems say they are not guilty of neglect but only if they are authorised ministers or healers for a recognised denomination or religion.

But no mainstream religion says that healing is guaranteed through prayer. Minor faiths do and are soon proven wrong. And some fanatics who have prayed for their own children who died, still insist that faith healing by anybody at all should be regarded as an acceptable treatment.

And the state deciding which organisation is an authority on faith healing and which one isn't is a violation of the separation that is needed between religion and state.

Laws along the lines of Idaho's "The practice of a parent or guardian who chooses for his child treatment by prayer or spiritual means alone shall not for that reason alone be construed to have violated the duty of care to such child" are intolerable.