Honouring the patient

Davidson writes excellently about the risk of too much medicine in Oman and the Middle East suggesting that this may be related to traditional Arab culture that seeks to please too much medicine in Oman and the Middle East.

This is known as ikram ad-Dai’, an Arabic phrase which can be translated as ‘honouring one’s guest’, one of the most established practices in Arab and the wider Muslim tradition. Application of this may, indeed, make it difficult for doctors to refuse unrealistic and inappropriate patient requests, fuelling rising patient expectations.

However, it is noteworthy to remember, that honouring someone is also to fulfil one’s obligation to them. Core medical principles such as effective communication and shared decision making should be applied alongside sensible and judicious medical investigation and prescribing; this would be, in my opinion, truly honouring one’s guest and fulfilling one’s obligation towards them and the healthcare system as a whole.

Low vitamin D prevalence at the GP practice

There was recently a recommendation by the Scientific Advisory Committee on nutrition that suggests everyone from the age of 1 year should take vitamin D supplements.1 The plan is still in consultation, but it highlights the high prevalence of vitamin D deficiency in the population.2 We have conducted a study of the prevalence of low vitamin D at Garswood general practice surgery, in Northwest England. We took the value of 75 nmol/L as the cut-off for low in vitamin D level. A total of 302 patients had their vitamin D level checked, of which an average of across all age groups had low vitamin D.

The findings correlates with a global meta-analysis study, where close to 90% of the samples had levels <75 nmol/L, although variability exists across region, sex and age.3 We used the 75 nmol/L level as a cut-off as a matter of simplicity for comparison, but we are aware of the ambiguity that still exists about the absolute cut-off level defined as low vitamin D.4,5 In view of the recent findings and recommendation, we believe we should look into devising a systematic way of screening and supplementing everyone with vitamin D.

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REFERENCES