

Colleagues, students and friends:

For centuries many doctors offered enormous possibilities of cures for their patients. As a result, patients held doctors in the highest regard, even though, in terms of the resources of modern medicine, they could provide very little.

One question that often arises is *how come, despite the colossal advances in technology since the 1950s and with the doctors' understanding of diseases and their treatment, doctors receive much less respect than their predecessors did only 50 years ago?* The answer is simple but the problem complex: doctors are invariably treating patients as diseases instead of persons with illnesses.

When a person is *metamorphosed into a patient* he expects that the healthcare worker he is turning to for help will care about him as a whole: As a person with a psycho-social-spiritual-financial-moral background. As someone who is suffering and thus will spend enough time with him that the patient will be persuaded he is being cared for.

This is in summary the plight of the physicians of the 21st century and the topic of today's conference. I hope it will shed some light on important issues that mean a lot to everyone involved in healthcare (from patient to provider to administrator etc). For only then we would be honoring the "profession of medicine" as it is meant to be and medicine can be said to be really "patient centered".