

Guest Editorial

The Good Doctor gone bad: a medicolegal error in Season 4 Episode 5 titled "Fault"

Salman Mansoor¹, Shoab Saadat²

Background:

Incorporating Medical sciences into literary, visual, and dramatic arts has long been recognized as an area of broader public interest by authors and screenwriters. Medical dramas and television shows have now taken center stage in the entertainment industry.

Many notable medical shows have drawn interest from healthcare professionals and the general public. It's interesting to see how these dramas can simulate a real hospital setting; however, everything shown on television is not medically correct. Some medical inaccuracies and errors can lead to a severe adverse outcome if overlooked in an actual situation.

The Good Doctor:

The Good Doctor is an ongoing series that first aired on Sept 25, 2017. It was shot in Vancouver, British Columbia. It revolves around Shaun Murphy, who is an autistic savant surgical resident. Dr. Murphy works at a fictional hospital, San Jose St. Bonaventure Hospital, supervised by Dr. Audrey Lim, the chief of surgery, and Dr. Aaron Glassman, San Jose St. Bonaventure president. Hospital.

The Good Doctor Season 4 Episode 5

In episode 5 from Season 4 of "The Good Doctor" titled Fault, Shaun Murphy, the lead actor, diagnoses a patient with acute stroke.

The patient is a middle-aged lady who is an active smoker and is on Estrogen. She comes with high blood pressure and, on examination, is found to have a right-sided tongue deviation. High blood pressure is attributed to loss of variation due to an underlying circadian rhythm disorder.

Author's affiliation:

Cummings School of Medicine, University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada¹

Department of Nephrology, Mid-Essex Hospitals, NHS Trust, United Kingdom²

Corresponding Author: Salman Mansoor

Email: salmanmansoor.dr@gmail.com

The right-sided tongue deviation and the circadian rhythm disturbance are narrowed down to a right vertebral artery occlusion with stroke in evolution. Establishing his diagnosis, Dr. Murphy decides to administer thrombolytic therapy without neuro-imaging.

The established diagnosis here is undoubtedly brilliant; however, Dr. Murphy makes a major mistake in his stroke management as he administers the thrombolytic therapy without acquiring any CT-Scan. The medical error that has been made might lead to serious repercussions if it was a hemorrhagic stroke. It is hereby suggested that Dr. Audrey Lim and Dr. Aaron Glassman at San Jose St. Bonaventure Hospital should carry out an internal investigation in this case and take appropriate action. Dr. Murphy should improve his stroke management skills to avoid any future adverse outcomes that can jeopardize his career.

General Critique:

Although from an entertainment point of view, these medical sitcoms provide a good sense of the hospital environment. However, they can also lead to a treatment bias in actual patients and their families in real-life situations. Most of the time, these shows either over-represent or under-represent these scenarios.

An interesting study found a discrepancy in the medical errors depicted in these shows to the US hospital statistics, which may lead to a delay in patients seeking medical care or a higher rate of medico legal issues.⁽¹⁾

Similarly, another interesting paper compared the depiction of trauma cases in a medical show "Grey's Anatomy" to National Trauma Databank statistics. It concluded that depicting rapid functional recovery after a major trauma may lead to false expectations and hopes in an actual setting.⁽²⁾

Many other quotable examples of medical mistakes occur in visual and dramatic arts, but the entertainment aspect cannot be undermined. These shows provide an insight into a modern hospital environment and may serve as an educational tool at a larger level. However, the audience should acknowledge that these shows are

not always medically correct, and they shouldn't be taken into account when dealing with real-life situations.

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