

Study of Medicine

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Q53. By virtue of their study, medical students, male and female, are required, as part of their training, to examine non-mahram people which involves touching and looking. Since this training is part of the curriculum and is essential for future treatment of the patients and equips the students with the know-how to make life-saving decisions and otherwise, it may result in prolonging the disease period or even death of the patient, is it permissible to embark on such a practice?

A: There is no problem in it if it is considered as one of the necessary things to gain knowledge and experience in the field of treating patients and saving lives.

Q54. It is said that in necessary cases it is permissible for medical students to examine non-mahram patients. Who should determine such necessity?

A: The student can judge such necessity, taking into account the prevailing circumstances.

Q55. In certain situations, we are faced with instances of examining a non-mahram patient's body without being able to tell whether we will make use of the experience we acquire from such an examination? However, this is a requirement of the curriculum and an assignment by the professor to the student. In view of this, is it permissible for us to carry out these examinations?

A: The medical examination being part of the curriculum or an assignment required from the student by his professor does not justify the commission of what Islamic law has decreed unlawful. However, the criterion here is the need for the training to save the human life or the requirement of a necessity.

Q56. For the sake of medical training and gaining skill and experience, is there any difference between examining the genitals and the other parts of the bodies of non-mahram persons? What is the ruling in the matter of male doctors practicing midwifery and other childbirth complications in remote villages where no female doctor is available; noting that one of such complications is life-threatening bleeding after labor? Stopping such bleeding needs proper training and experience during the course of study in schools of medicine?

A: Insofar as necessity is concerned, there is no difference between the ruling of examining the genitals and the other parts of the human body. The universal criterion is the need for the training and study of medicine to save the human life. However, in such situations, one should suffice with necessary cases.

Q57. In most cases where examining the genitals, whether by a male or a female, is called for the shar'i standards are seldom upheld by the student or teacher, such as examination through the mirror. Since we have no alternative but to follow them in order to gain experience in diagnosing the illnesses, how should we go about it?

A: There is no harm in studying medicine and training in it, even by carrying out examinations which are haram in themselves provided that it is essential for training in medicine and acquiring experience in treating the sick. In addition to that, the student must be confident that ability to save human life in the future depends on knowledge acquired in this way. He must also be confident that he would be in a situation whereby the sick are



going to consult him to seek his advice and that he would be responsible to save their lives.

Q58. Is it permissible to look at the pictures of non-Muslims usually found in the books of medicine, noting that such pictures are of semi-naked men and women?

A: There is no objection to it provided it is done without questionable intents and pleasure and that no fear of bad deeds is contemplated.

Q59. In the course of their study, medical students watch films and look at pictures showing the genitals for learning purposes. Is this permissible? And what is the view on looking at the private parts of the opposite sex?

A: There is no objection to watching such films and looking at such pictures in themselves provided it is done without the intention of getting sexual pleasure and no fear of committing a ḥarām act is involved. What is ḥarām is looking at or touching the body of the opposite sex. Also looking at pictures or watching films of others' private parts is not unproblematic.

Q60. What is required of a woman in labor? And what is required of the female nursing staff insofar as the uncovering of and looking at the genitals of the woman in labor are concerned?

A: It is not permissible for the nurses to deliberately look at the private parts of a woman in labor unless it is necessary. The same goes for the doctor who should avoid looking at the body of the patient or touching it unless it is necessary. As for the woman, she should do her best to cover herself if she is aware and able to do that or to ask other people to do it for her.

Q61. In the course of the study of and training in medicine, they use plastic models configuring the human reproductive system. What is the ruling in the matter of handling these models and looking at them?

A: Artificial organs and genitals do not have the same ruling as the real ones. Therefore, there is no objection to looking at and handling them unless a questionable intent is involved or it entails arousing one's sexual desire.

Q62. As a doctor, my research within the Western scientific circles aims at relieving pain by way of music, touching, dancing, medication, and electric shocks. Medical opinion points to the fact that the research in these types of therapy has proved fruitful. Is it permissible to embark on the same road?

A: There is no shar'ī impediment to investigating this affair to see how effective it is in treating illnesses provided that it does not entail getting entangled in practices which are ḥarām.

Q63. Is it permissible for female nurses to look at a woman's genitals if their study requires it?

A: If the treatment of diseases or saving a respectful life depends on taking a lesson which includes looking at the private parts of others, there is no problem in doing so.