

Doctors Are Individual People

Each one of the 160,000 physicians in the U.S. is first and foremost an individual human being.

He starts in life with a physical make-up including glandular structure, which gives him a certain temperament and predispositions which are the heritage of his ancestors. He grows up in an individual family environment where he is exposed to certain cultural, social, psychological, educational and other influences which mold his views and attitudes and behavior patterns, and to some extent modify the organic structure through which he acts. After receiving a basic education in his local environment, he is exposed for several years to the study of the basic sciences, and then for several more years to clinical studies. After a year or more of apprenticeship, he begins to have other human beings come to him for treatment for physical or emotional difficulties.

After he finishes his medical school, he seldom or never gets any additional formal education. Most of the new ideas which he gets come from reading, from formal or informal discussions with other doctors, from printed advertising to which he is exposed, and to a large extent, from detail men from various pharmaceutical firms with whom he talks for a few minutes nearly every day.

As a human being, he is comparatively quick or comparatively slow; he is comparatively hard-working or he is comparatively lazy; he is friendly or crabby; social or solitary; happy or unhappy. His morning contacts with his wife and children affect in a greater or lesser degree his attitude toward patients, toward co-workers, and toward detail men. His basic temperament, modified by his daily interpersonal relations, influence all his actions and attitudes to some extent.

His human-beingness is modified by his being a physician. As a physician, both society and he himself set up some principles of belief and behavior which tend in certain respects to make him more like other physicians than like other groups who have different basic interests and approaches to life.

Safe Generalizations

We can safely make a number of generalizations about all human beings as human beings, including that they are social animals who are happiest when they have the respect and affection of the people around them.