

CONNECTIONS

BULLETIN OF THE GOVERNMENT MEDICAL COLLEGE CHANDIGARH OLD STUDENTS
ASSOCIATION (GMCCOSA)

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From the Editors desk



Thank you everyone, for the overwhelming response to GMCCOSA and 'Connections'. The first edition of Connections was e-mailed to around 200 GMC alumni around the New Year. We are trying to incorporate some of the changes that readers have suggested in this edition, and we will continue to improve it over the next few issues.

We had initially planned to publish 'Connections' every six months, but because of persuasion from many people, we are making it a quarterly. To keep up with four issues a year, we will need your support and continued enthusiasm in the form of anecdotes and experiences that we can put in print.

We are continually striving to improve our website (gmccosa.tripod.com). The response to our website has been exceptional. Besides India, the USA and the UK, it has been accessed from Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Netherlands. Thanks to all who have sent me photographs, information about 'life-events', whereabouts of their classmates, and thanks to 'the regulars' who have kept the message board active. I am not sure if these numbers mean much, but at the time of writing this editorial, our site had received approximately 2400 hits since it was first published (around Christmas 2003). We still have much to achieve with respect to its accessibility; please do encourage GMCites in your contact who do not know about GMCCOSA, to visit our website. Besides articles and photographs that might stir up some good memories and nostalgia, we have tried to make the site 'practical'. There are links to websites that might have some useful content for current students and for those preparing for the USMLE or Indian post-graduate entrance exams. We are in the process of updating our message board, so that questions and answers regarding useful topics (eg. USMLE, GRE, residency preparation etc) can be easily accessed. Advitya Malhotra ('96 batch) has compiled some suggestions for preparing for the USMLE/GRE, which, again, I hope some of you might find helpful.

Next on the cards is starting a career seminar series, where alumni who have achieved success in their respective fields, both in India and abroad, will describe their experiences and tell us how they reached their current positions, discuss the potential avenues of the career they are pursuing, and most importantly, what others might need to do if they have similar interests and ambition.

We welcome Sandeep Kochar ('93 batch) to our editorial board. He has been a source of constant encouragement since GMCCOSA was formed. We are all confident that he will be an invaluable asset to our organization. We are on the look out for more members for the newsletter editorial board so that we can ensure adequate representation of all batches.

In the end, I want to emphasize again the need for material (photographs, articles, anecdotes etc) to maintain this newsletter as a quarterly.

So folks, as I always say, read on ... criticize, encourage, contribute, suggest, keep me posted and certainly do KEEP IN TOUCH.

Navneet S Majhail
(Class of '91)

GMCCOSA Contributes to Euphoria 2004

GMCCOSA contributed Rs 10,812 to the organizing committee of Euphoria 2004. We would like to thank the following alumni for their support: Amarender Prakash ('91), Amit Monga ('91), Hemender Singh ('91), Jaswinder Singh ('91), Navneet Majhail ('91), Neeraj Manchanda ('91), Surmeet Kaur ('91), Mini Kamboj ('93), Sandeep Kochar ('93), Ashish Behl ('94), Nancy Sharma ('94), Vikas Sharotri ('94) and Advitya Malhotra ('96). GMCCOSA will continue to support current GMC batches for different events/projects.

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GMCCOSA

Message From The Director Principal



It is indeed a great pleasure to learn that the first batch of GMC, Chandigarh, students have formed an informal organization of the GMC alumni and are planning to circulate a bi-annual newsletter. It is often said that girls of a particular village after marriage and boys after leaving their school never meet again but this newsletter will certainly serve as a forum for interaction between the old students.

This Govt. Medical College, started with the intake of 50 students in 1991, has made rapid strides since its inception. The students of this institution are the cream of this city; those allocated through the DGHS for CBSE quota are also from a very high rank of merit which speaks volumes for the excellent reputation of the college achieved in a relatively short span of time. Our emphasis is to provide teaching and training facilities of an exceptionally high standard to the medical students.

Postgraduate courses in the subjects of anatomy, ophthalmology, anesthesia and pathology were started in January 2001. In addition, PG Courses in subjects of orthopedics, pediatrics and community medicine began in February 2002. In 2003, the departments of forensic medicine and respiratory medicine & tuberculosis started PG courses. BSc in ophthalmic techniques and MSc in anatomy and physiology have also been started at GMC. Permission for PG in obstetrics & gynecology has also been granted.

A number of students have secured placements abroad, mainly in the USA, with high percentile marks in the USMLE examination. In addition to academic excellence, students of this College have consistently performed well at different cultural, literary and sports activities.

I once again convey my heartfelt congratulations to the first batch students of this College for mitigating the distances by starting this newsletter and wish them all success for this praiseworthy endeavor.

Jan 21st 2004

Prof HM Swami, MBBS, MD
Director Principal
Government Medical College & Hospital
Sector-32, Chandigarh

An Elective in Uganda

Sandeep Kochar ('93), currently a resident in internal & preventive medicine (Griffin Hospital/Yale University) in the USA, recently visited Uganda for an elective in international health; read on about his experiences...

I recently had the remarkable opportunity of doing an international clinical elective in the east African country of Uganda. I worked with the Academic-Alliance, a nonprofit organization formed by Merle Sande (of the Sanford Guide, a commonly used pocket reference for antibiotics and infectious diseases in the USA) and Pfizer. This organization specifically aims to provide HIV related care and training in Uganda and is made up of prominent infectious disease physicians from North America and Uganda.

Uganda has a population about 25 million people, predominantly rural based. Uganda is a land locked country, bordered by Sudan to the North, the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west, Rwanda and Tanzania to the South, and Kenya to the East. The country lies almost smack on the equator. The capital is Kampala, located in the southeastern part of the country and on the northern shores of Lake Victoria. Eighty kilometers east of Kampala is Jinja, which lies on Lake Victoria and is presumed to be the source of the river Nile. Being in Uganda is very much like being in India and so I won't elaborate too much on those details.

Uganda is of interest to Indians for several reasons. Of course we are all aware of the expulsion of all Asians from Uganda in the early seventies by the notorious and recently demised dictator Idi Amin. For a chilling audio commentary of his speech in which he explains his reasons, access the following link: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1069166.stm.

Several Indians who now run small and medium scale thriving businesses in the USA (motels, convenience and liquor stores) are a by-product of that expulsion. Of course, the current president of Uganda who overcame Idi Amin in 1986, Yoweri Moseveni has restored most of the properties back to Asians and has encouraged them to come back. Kampala even has a 'Sikh street', a 'Nehru street', a Gurudwara and a Hindu temple in one section of the town. Indian food (particularly Mughlai) is the most popular food for foreigners and affluent Ugandans, and in canteens on the university campus, samosas, paranthas and chai are a perennial favorite with all.

We worked on the Makerere University campus in Kampala, which is the main academic institution of the country. My mentor was Dr Allan Ronald, considered to be the 'father' of infectious diseases in Canada. He is a wonderful individual, committed to the cause of the underprivileged and has spent the last several years working in Africa, mostly in Kenya. His wife Myrna, who does a lot of administrative chores and

other assorted tasks, supports him admirably in his endeavors.

Most of our days were spent working in the HIV outpatient clinic that runs on alternate days. They see about 100-120 patients on each day and you can in one day virtually see the entire gamut of HIV related opportunistic infections. A recent encouraging development has been the provision of anti-retroviral therapy. It is provided as Triomune (made by Cipla, India), which is combination of three anti-retroviral agents and is taken twice daily. It is available at a monthly cost of fifty thousand shillings (about 25 US dollars). Despite this price, most Ugandans are hard pressed to procure these medications. There are several large multi-nation HIV trials going on in Africa. Enrollees in trials get Triomune free of cost. Even though one of the first cases of HIV/AIDS originated in Uganda and it is the epicenter of the AIDS pandemic that is destroying the social fabric of many African nations, Uganda is considered to be one of the few success stories on the African continent for this devastating disease.

On days when we were not attending the clinic we worked on developing clinical algorithms to manage HIV related issues in a restraint-constrained setting. This is part of a grant by the Bill Gates Foundation to manage clinical problems with the few available resources. I worked on developing a clinical algorithm for "The Immune Reconstitution Syndrome"; people who regain some functionality of their immune system shortly after starting highly active anti-retroviral therapy (HAART) often present with flare-ups of latent opportunistic infections because their restored immune system mounts a response against these organisms. The HIV clinic also has a pediatric/adolescent wing doing wonderful work in providing care to this group of patients. Perhaps some of the most heart breaking moments are when one has to break this diagnosis to adolescents and teenagers who are poised at the prime of their life.

Apart from work, there were several things to enjoy in Uganda. In the evenings we were able to visit different parts of the city and get an idea of their culture. There are nice restaurants, clubs and bars serving famous Ugandan Nile beer. One night in one of the dance clubs, we also had an opportunity to perform bhangra on a Daler Mehndi number; needless to say, the Ugandans loved this music! As tourists, people visit Uganda for two main reasons: gorilla watching and white-water rafting. Gorilla watching can be very expensive but is considered by many to be the experience of a lifetime. The Bugajali falls, considered to be the source of the river Nile, has some of the best white-water rafting in the world and because there no sharp rocks under the surface of the water, even the uninitiated are plunged into grade five rapids (without a doubt one of the most thrilling and scariest moments in my life!). We also got to see a wild life safari, though the game is not as plenty and diverse as you might get to see in the southern part of the continent.

The elective was a great one in many ways. I got to meet many doctors and residents from different parts of the

world, all committed to a variety of different causes. It was also a means to look closely at the health system and problems in another part of the world. Many visiting doctors have adopted HIV infected adolescents with the pledge of bearing the cost of their medications, schooling and upbringing.

If anyone is ever interested in doing an elective in Uganda, please let me know and I will try and set up this elective for you.

*Sandeep Kochar
(Class of '93)*

Lest We Forget...

Below is the editorial from the photo-book/souvenir of 1993 batch.

We thank Gurpreet Sarao ('93) for sending us a copy.

The memories of the summer of '93 are still afresh in our minds when we entered the Prayas Building as 'Young Budding Doctors' at a time when GMC was in its so called 'infancy', just two years old (although toddler would have been a better term). And what a journey it has been from dissecting human beings in the dissection hall (although only a few did that), where the ever pervasive stench of formalin seemed to permeate every part of our being to the joy of watching a baby emerge from the birth canal of the mother and hearing its first soulful cry.

And then to the bedside, where we nervously examined our first real life patients and took histories and made diagnoses which were largely unheard of.

And then finally into internship where we saw real sufferings, pain, disease, agony, anguish, people battling the inescapable jaws of death... and a realization that, 'the essential quality of a physician is an interest in humanity, for the secret of the cure of the patient is in caring for the patient'.

But through this journey, we all shared some unforgettable moments, forged strong bonds of friendship (of course, some not too strong), some that shall culminate in marital bliss. The horrors of examination, the delights of success, the sheer thrill of festivals and college trips, the goings on in the canteen, back biting of teachers and friends and some funny comments in the toilets, we shall savor them all.

They say all good things come to an end. And so the class of 1993 which enjoyed the tag of 'best class' crown during its tenure in GMC has come and gone but not without leaving an indelible mark on the short history of this college. We shall now sail different boats. Some shall make breakthrough discoveries, perhaps find some new cure (don't forget AIDS), some shall be famous for the way they yield the scalpel, some as astute physicians and some shall seek foreign land to make their destiny.

But at the end of it, let us not forget our humble beginning together, a feeling of togetherness and pride we felt as the class of '93 and make a pledge to keep in touch because to have a lamp burning, you have to keep putting oil in it.



Report on Euphoria '04 from our Chandigarh editor Manish Mehta ('97)

Come February and the medicos of prominent north Indian medical colleges put away their stethoscopes and daily rounds to let their hair down at 'Euphoria', the annual festival of GMCH Chandigarh. Organized by students of the final and pre-final year batches, Euphoria presents an excellent opportunity for both medical professionals and students to take a break from the rigors of their profession and celebrate the joy of life - for that is what Euphoria is all about.

This year Euphoria was held at the GMCH from February 26th thru 29th. Students from 20 medical colleges took part in events which ranged from the informal to serious brain racking stuff. The festival was 'ignited' with a *Hasya Kavi Sammelan* featuring prominent poets who had the audience rolling in the aisles. *Silken Sonnets*, the singing competition, gave the medicos a chance to exercise their vocal chords in a much more melodious manner than usual. *Invocation* and *Blitzkrieg*, the western and Indian dance competition, saw them match the Bollywood and Hollywood stars step for step. Serious issues were raised and debated in *Verbal Duel*, the debate contest. *Mind Games*, the general knowledge quiz saw the participants pit their minds against each other and the quizmaster's clock. Budding Saroj Khans and Prabhu Devas were given a chance to showcase their talent in *Best Foot Forward*, the choreography competition.

A host of off stage events saw participants engaging in *Arm Wrestling* (in true Punjab da putter style), making use of sign language in *Dumb Charades*, getting eggs on their face and hands in the *Egg Catching* competition. The informals culminated with the crowning of *Mister and Miss Euphoria 2004*, for their charming personality, talent and wit.



The biggest attraction of the festival was the *Professional Night*. Saade Punjab da apna Malkit Singh, made audiences go wild with his evergreen number 'tootak tootak...' along with many of his other popular Punjabi numbers.

An added attraction was *Amnesia*, the all night dance party held on all four days, where the participants let their feet dance to pulsating music to cap a day full of enjoyment and celebration.

'Euphoria 2004' more than lived up to its name; the participants left with bitter-sweet memories and with the promise that GMCH will be back again next year, with a BIGGER and BETTER 'Euphoria 2005'.

Kudos

...to the organizers of Euphoria 2004 for making it a grand success.

...to Navneet Singh Chawla ('92) for starting DM (Pulmonary & Critical Care) at PGIMER, Chandigarh in January 2004.

...to Surmeet Bedi ('91) for being selected as Chief Resident, Internal Medicine, Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center, Chicago, Illinois, USA for 2005-2006.

...to Meeta Singh ('91) for securing a fellowship in Sleep Medicine, Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit, Michigan, USA starting July 2004.

...to Mini Kamboj ('93) for being selected as Chief Resident, Internal Medicine, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, USA for 2004-2005.

...to Preety Chawla ('94) for being selected as Chief Resident, Internal Medicine, Beth Israel Medical Center, New York, New York, USA for 2004-2005.

...to Ashish Pal Saini ('97) for topping the GMC Chandigarh post-graduate entrance examination.

...to the following GMC graduates for securing residency positions in Internal Medicine in the USA (starting July 2004):

- ▲ Advitya Malhotra ('96), (Internal Medicine) Univ of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, Texas.
- ▲ Anamika Rai ('93), (Internal Medicine) Michigan State Univ, Kalamazoo, Michigan.
- ▲ Ashish Behl ('94), (Internal Medicine) Univ of Pittsburgh Medical Center - Shadyside, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
- ▲ Gurpreet Sarao ('93), (Family Practice) West Jersey - Memorial Hospital, Voorhees, New Jersey.
- ▲ Jagdeep Kaur ('91), (Internal Medicine - Pediatrics) Geisinger Health System, Danville, Pennsylvania.
- ▲ Satinder Oberoi ('94), (Internal Medicine) Michael Reese Hospital - Univ of Illinois, Chicago, Illinois.
- ▲ Vikas Sharotri ('94), (Internal Medicine) Cook County Hospital, Chicago, Illinois.
- ▲ Vinay Mehta ('94), (Internal Medicine) Albert Einstein Medical Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Congratulations

Preeti Chawla ('94) wed Sandeep Kochar ('93) on 13th March 2004 (...finally, after NINE years of courtship!).



ESHAN (25th March 2004)
Rani & Neeraj ('91)

NAINA (5th March 2004)
Maninder & Jaswinder ('91)

NONIE (6th February 2004)
Anjali & Vivek ('91)

SUMIRA (4th February 2004)
Shalini ('91) & Manu

Stork Line



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