

# CONNECTIONS

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

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## Editorial

**G**MCCOSA is five years old today. Sometimes, I still find it hard to believe that it all started as a figment of my imagination. The initial website, hosted on 'gmccosa.tripod.com', consisted of only two pages (compared to almost 4000 files that make up the current website). Needless to say, the initial response was overwhelming, and gave us the encouragement to keep expanding and come up with new ideas. How much ever we diversify, our primary mission will always remain focused towards 'fostering a mutually beneficial and enduring relationship between the institution and its alumni' (Wow, I did come up with an impressive statement four years ago!).

This whole enterprise would not have been possible without the commitment of our motivated group of editorial board members, both present and past. Hemender Singh ('91), a comrade-in-arms from the first batch, has been keeping this newsletter alive with his wit and literary skills. KOSHISH, the baby of Sandeep Kochar ('93), gave us a whole new dimension and meaning. Manish Metha ('97) in the past, and Divyanshoo Rai Kohli ('03) now, have served as the vital lifeline to our alma mater. But what really keeps us going are the numerous unsolicited articles, photographs and updates our inbox receives, along with the occasional 'hello, I chanced upon [www.gmccosa.org](http://www.gmccosa.org)'. Words cannot describe the sense of fulfillment and invigoration these provide.

Besides working on our current projects, the main focus for GMCCOSA this coming year will be organizing a reunion. Rohit Jindal ('92) has taken the initiative to lead this onerous task. The initial details are being worked out and do keep coming back to our website for more details. I am eagerly waiting for this opportunity to revisit and relive GMCH.

In the meantime, stay connected...

*Navneet Majhail  
'91 batch*



## Prof Raj Bahadur Joins As New Director Principal



Professor Raj Bahadur, has joined as the new Director Principal of GMCH. He takes over from Professor HM Swami, who retired on October 31<sup>st</sup>. Prof Bahadur has had a close relationship with GMCH in the past. Prior to joining PGIMER in 2005, his tenure at GMCH spanned nearly a decade and included service as Head, Department of Orthopedics and Medical Superintendent. Along with the responsibility of Director-Principal of GMCH, he has been appointed Director, Medical Education and Research, for Chandigarh.

GMCCOSA extends its heartiest congratulations to Prof Bahadur and looks forward towards continued collaboration to make GMCH one of the premier institutions in the country.

# Nostalgia

## ...With Prof Harsh Mohan

**O**ur editor Hemender Singh ('91), caught up with Prof Harsh Mohan, Head, Department of Pathology and President Elect of the Indian Association of Pathologists and Microbiologists. He shares memories and experiences that he has accumulated over the past 13 years at GMCH.



**Editors (Eds.):** We have known you from the very early years of GMC. What made you come to GMC? Was it a very tough decision?

**Prof Harsh Mohan (HM):** Well, yes, it was, and it continues to be, the dream of any serious and ambitious professional medico serving in academic position to rise to the top slot at a good place. At that time (end-1993) when I had to take a decision between continuing with a settled home, well respected professional and social life at Rohtak on one hand, versus a challenging job ahead of heading and establishing a totally new department from scratch, I chose the latter for two main reasons. Firstly, I was relatively young (I was about 40 then) and was full of energies, initiative, motivation and had a vision of what I wanted to develop and was thus prepared to take the challenge. Secondly, my wife was quite supportive of the idea of shifting out of Rohtak for prospects of better life in this city, especially for both our daughters who were at that time 6 and 12 years old. We moved to Chandigarh in installments though - I moved here on 31st December 1993, my daughters joined me at the beginning of their academic session for schools in April 1994, while my wife followed us later here in January 1996.

**Eds.:** GMC had some very rough initial years and you were at the forefront of the struggle with the students of the first batch in their fight for the recognition. Did you ever consider leaving GMC at that time? What made you stay back?

**HM:** The period of 1995 and 1996 was surely full of tribulations for our brilliant and highly motivated

students of first batch, as also for faculty, since this period was full of uncertainties for all. While the best of students from Chandigarh had invested their valuable five years with hopes for a bright and shining future ahead, recognition of the MBBS course by the Medical Council of India was elusive since the MCI was not willing to budge from its stand on twin issues of having own functional hospital for the GMCH instead of attached General Hospital-16 and on having own faculty of the college rather than borrowed faculty taken on deputation from different institutions. There were gloomy and depressing times in between, especially in 1995 when the first batch of students had to take the university exam of final professional under supervision of MCI observers with the entire faculty being on temporary appointment either on deputation or ad hoc basis. Besides, there had been change of guard at the level of Director Principal in the college, with Prof Chopra having superannuated in June 1995 and Prof Kak taking over in August 1995. But I must say that both Prof Chopra and Prof Kak together made sure that a leadership vacuum did not develop. Instead, the changed leadership in the institution led to further consolidation of plans and gains and led to quick decisions of far-reaching consequences for future of the college—MCI inspection of the final exam of first batch, initiation of advertisement of the faculty posts for filling on regular basis through UPSC, and a stop gap arrangement in having faculty on contract.

I must confess here that between June 1995 and August 1995, I had seriously considered going back to Rohtak owing to above reasons as well as pressure from Haryana Government for joining back in Rohtak, but I changed my mind after August-September 1995 sometime after joining of Prof Kak. I think it must go to the credit of Prof Kak that besides his several other qualities, he had a very sharp eye to spot the potential in individuals and put that to fullest use for the institution and that influenced me greatly to change my mind.

**Eds.:** What was your opinion of the first few batches of GMC when they were being impudent due to their struggles with MCI? Has that opinion now changed over the years?

**HM:** I think the first few batches of our undergraduates were much more sincere, honest and determined in their professional approach and

exemplary conduct, which coupled with direction from some well meaning faculty members, led to our success in having timely recognition from MCI. At the same time, recruitment of faculty on regular basis too commenced in all earnest; resultantly those working on deputation were either regularized after selection through UPSC or they went back in the next 1 to 2 years. It goes to the credit of students of the first few batches that they have retained their old values and respect for their teachers and concern and caring attitude for their alumni. Not that all is not as well now, but, in general, the present lot of students have probably become much more materialistic and do not share a similar emotional bond of teacher-taught but have instead come to treat this relationship as consumer-provider. But then, there is universal change in value system!

**Eds.: Besides the charm of the city, what do you think makes GMC so special for so many students who want to come here? Do you think the college authorities are doing enough to maintain standards and keep it attractive like that?**

**HM:** No doubt, GMC has been privileged in attracting highly meritorious students, whether in MBBS or in MD/MS courses, whether from the city or through All-India entrance examinations from other parts of the country. None of the other state medical colleges in the entire North India can take such a pride. However, on the part of authorities, I regret that barring sporadic involvement of the faculty, mainly at their personal level, there is no conscious or organized attempt at official level to maintain such an attraction. Nevertheless, the fact remains that infrastructure of the institution is quite modern having developed in 1990s and that faculty is relatively young and energetic, makes it fairly attractive package. However, there is certainly a need to harness the energy and potential of dynamic faculty and channelize it in a positive and creative manner for further progress of GMCH, or else they would divert their efforts towards non-productive and selfish issues over and above the institutional issues and bring it to a destructive course like most other Government-run state medical colleges have gone in the vicinity.

**Eds.: You have taken over other responsibilities in the hospital besides your academic work. Has that affected you in any way? Do you still get to spend enough time in pathology?**

**HM:** On an earlier occasion in 2000, I had declined to take up the additional responsibility of Medical Superintendent due to my academic and family commitments at that time. Again, in 2004 while I had applied for the post of DP in UPSC along with 9 other Professors, but I took a conscious decision of not appearing for the interview although all other 9 had appeared for the interview. That is a different matter that officiating DP Prof Swami only got selected through UPSC then. But in December 2005, I could not refuse in spite of my other academic commitments and took a plunge to take up the additional responsibility as MS. This decision was, however, much against the advice of my mentor settled abroad (Incidentally I have voluntarily quit recently as MS in December 2007). Since January 2007, I have also been assigned the charge as Professor-Incharge Academics – which I am continuing because I am happy to contribute my bit for academics and for the present and former students in some way if I can. All this time, my loyalty and commitment to my specialty, department and family has always remained undisputedly supreme and therefore I try my best to spend as much quality time and put efforts on them as possible.

**Eds.: I was recently in Maharashtra on a volunteer health mission trip. I met physicians there who had read your book for pathology and were all words for it. How do you feel when you hear such good things about your creation?**

**HM:** My books have surely brought me closer to my students. Through this medium, I feel like a teacher to whole lot of students in the country (and abroad in some countries) and thus do not remain confined to the narrow confines of the institution where I serve and teach. My books for MBBS and BDS students (they are also read by postgraduates in some colleges) have progressed very well in terms of their circulation and popularity, but comments from students and fellow teachers give me the greatest satisfaction and happiness. These encourage me so much that if I get time I would like to undertake more of such projects for uncovered streams of students of pathology such as for paramedical courses. The success of books has surely not only made me more humble and contented but it also keeps reminding me of responsibility of revising and



updating them periodically to keep in line with current times and expectations of users.

**Eds.: We are trying to promote research skills of our students and invoke their interest in scholarly activities to expose them to the present day world of medicine. What do you think of these efforts, and being a senior faculty member, what other recommendations do you have for improvement?**

**HM:** GMC has been ranked 24th in All-India Ranking of Medical Colleges done by India Today in its annual issue on May 2007. While it is a reason for celebration for all of us that we have achieved this high rank in such a short time of about 15 years, but at the same time we need to ponder why we are not among the top 10 in the country! I think the main reason about this is two-fold: research activity/scientific publications by the institution and the placement of alumni. This is where there is role of support for all kinds for development of aptitude for research by the students from early years. The effort by the senior former students in this regard is certainly laudable and they should have official support and encouragement too.

**Eds.: You have worked with various Directors. Do you have any experiences to share?**

**HM:** Yes, I had the opportunity of serving this institution with all the DPs since inception of this college. While there has always been something to learn from experiences of all of them, surely the period of having served with the first two DPs, Prof Chopra and Prof Kak, has been memorable period since there was so much to learn from their style of working, public speaking and social interaction. It appears ironic that we all human beings miss all that is gone by but do not value it as much when we have them.

Let me recall one important utterance by these two gentlemen during their times: Prof Chopra, when certain professor was trying to accompany him down the stairs in the building, commented once "Oye, tussi whele ho, tuhanu koi kamm nahin je mere pichhe pichhe ture aande ho" and Prof Kak on reluctance of some person to perform according to his standards and norms commented "I am not here to waste my time".

**Eds.: I heard you have a daughter in the US. How is she doing? Have you visited the US? Do you get to**

**spend time with your family considering you have so many professional responsibilities?**

**HM:** Besides my professional pursuits, I have taken care that all members of my immediate family develop well professionally and become useful to the society. My wife Praveen has been back in India after her 6 years sojourn in Kuwait, as Professor and Head in Obstetrics and Gynecology in a private medical college, Gian Sagar Medical College at Banur near Patiala for the last one year. Our elder daughter, after finishing her graduation in chemical engineering in India, moved to US in 2003 to pursue MS in her specialty and has been in a job in US for the last two years. Our younger daughter is in her third year of BDS course in Government Dental College at Rohtak. We have all visited the US since our older one moved there and I have also made two professional visits to this country - one as a visiting professor at the University of Massachusetts at Worcester, MA, and the other at Harvard Medical School, Boston, for a CME program.

I strongly believe that we need to draw a balance in our life between profession and family. My professional commitments extend far from my department and institution and include role at national level as Editor of Indian Journal of Pathology and Microbiology for 5 years ending in December 2007 and now as President of Indian Association of Pathologists and Microbiologists for 2008, authorship and periodic revision of books, travel to several places to deliver guest lectures and conduct slide seminars as guest faculty at conferences or CME's, and conduct examination or inspection for MBBS, MD or DNB. Nevertheless, I have always given an equally great importance to my family. In fact, since our children have moved to pursue their respective professional goals, we almost invariably travel together during my professional visits.

**Eds.: Any last words of advice...**

**HM:** I would end by saying that I have kept my motto in life to give my best to my profession and family by performing deeds (Karma) and not in words, and this has given me greatest satisfaction and is key to happiness. Success, material comforts, popularity, position etc follow if we are able to draw a balance in life between profession and family.

# Musings

Editors: During random browsing of Orkut, we chanced upon a treasure trove of photographs by Jatinder Singh ('96). Below is a sampling of his talent. More photographs can be viewed at [www.flickr.com/photos/jsingh](http://www.flickr.com/photos/jsingh)





# Coffee with Crème – Dress Code: Khaki (A Page from My Diary)

**A**paved walkway, falling leaves, an Italian fountain, dusky sky and a couple of doves... my instincts dared my eyes to see beyond all this. She was sitting right across me on a broken bench holding a book with a deliberately changed title; the change probably assuaged her pain. "Un" Learning Love seemed more appropriate to her wavering mind. I was in no mood to learn after a tiring day on which mercury had decided to keep mercilessly low. It needed more than a blazer and a cup of coffee to keep me from shivering. I had not known that finally "just a little bit of human touch" would do it for me.

God cannot be willingly complained against his unknowing dedication of the same order to me as to the earth; he can be made guilty of writing a similar story. Deforesting the earth, exploiting it, spitting on it has probably derived inspiration from me - the tales seem to diverge when someone is awarded a Nobel Prize to save the earth; while many forget to realize that I may be in pain. Green looks good on my land; if shaven my identity would be barren! I cannot, even if I try, wash off all the brown. The best I can do is be scared of the most simple pleasure derived by adding crème to the coffee.

*"Mere bachhe hai duniya farishton kee", thha ammi ne samjhaya,*

*Kitney bholey tere sach ne maa, mujhe jeevan bhar behlaya!*

Sitting down on one of those benches, sipping dark coffee, I was moved. Only a few times can life decide to stir your senses. This time it had chosen me - a brown man, with a turban and a beard; and it had chosen Johnny - a white man, drunk, drugged and disorderly. His apparition from behind the mist broke my focus on her. This man had all the ingredients to make him an abuser and my appearance gave him all the reasons to justify that. He sat on a neighboring bench with his friend; who was equally inebriated. His mind possibly did not register my presence at first glance; the stare which followed it carried an entire tempest. Judgment is not any one's prerogative, neither is any one worthy of being misjudged, but everyone in this world is a

victim of it. There we sat, a white man and a brown man, with our judgments misplaced.

"You f\*\*\* Osama! I am talking to you...a\*\*\*\*le." My mind consciously decided not to react to it, although my visual cortex already was sending instructions to my hands to fold all the fingers save the longest, in appreciation of his gesture. His repetition of the choice words and ever so loudly the next time, reminded me of my mother's reaction at my recalcitrant behavior as a kid. My judgment indicated that his motive was to involve me into the war of races; my dominant super-ego said "ignoring would be bliss." But, when more than two hundred pounds of beef stands a greater part of seven feet in front of you and commands attention, only a fool can dare to look up, smile and get busy with a cup of dark coffee. I was tremulous within and shook more when he sat beside me, grabbed my arm hard and spat into my ears as he spoke, "why the f\*\*\* your people kill us, you d\*\*\* head, what are you doing here ... making other conspiracy ... huh!" "Hey! Look Dean, he will kill us ..." as he gestured to his friend, and then in a flash he broke his bottle, "you know what I will kill you, f\*\*\*\*\*n son of a ..."

I could not any longer pretend to be unaware of the venom in the air. It almost allayed my fears as I held his hand firmly, looked back into his eyes and stressed, "I think you are drunk, Sir. I never killed anyone; neither do I know any killers. We can discuss this like adults and not use any of the big words."

Johnny: (To Dean) "this guy knows English, ha ha ha ..." (To me) "what are you, a drug guy? Where you learn this from? You have coke!"

Me: "I am not a drug guy! I am a doctor and I teach in medical school. I learnt your language in my country. I am from India."

Johnny: "Oh! You a professah of some kind! India. Yea! Plenty doctor from India ... in here! Hey man! Listen I am an idiot, I f\*\*\*\*\*g not know good words. I am sorry ... I drop the high school ... My government not gives money for study ... I like to be lawyer, doctor ... What you think, I was born this s\*\*t head ...! Who wants to go to jail two times ... now, again I am on probation. I f\*\*\*\*\*g not like to work in burger shop ... I am good at drawing ... But f\*\*\*\*\*g ... hey! Sorry man, no bad words ... You are a professah!"

As much as I was relieved by his apology and disappearing red in his eyes, I was cursing myself that I could have gotten myself killed. How could I be such a fool; he had been to jail twice! I was still very scared. But I said to him, "Man! We need more educated people. It is not your fault that you called me names. You were ignorant about it. But, guess what, even those who are not so ignorant tend to discriminate." I thought to myself, "Apartheid is out from official books, but we still need to apart from hatred!" ... and asked him, "Why did they put you in jail?"

Johnny: "My landlord at my place, his roof broke ... he told me to fix ... I am good at fixing roof ... I did ... he not gave money ... I hit bastard's head ... he break a tooth and nose ... next time, this guy was hitting my father ... I hit him back ... he had money ... they put me in jail ... now they make me work at burger shop ... you think I love to make f\*\*\*\*\*g burgers all day ... they give 30 bucks ... I like to draw ... I can fix roof ... I can be a building man ... what you call ..."

Me: "I said 'architect'". He nodded. "Did you not tell the jail authorities that you want to study and you can work for money ... why don't you take a loan? May be you can write to the government or someone and request them. I do not know how this system works here. I wish I could help you!"

Johnny: "Yes, you help me ... You wear suit, tie... you know English ... you tell them ... I no bad man!"

Me: "I am a foreigner and I don't think anyone will listen to me. All I can do it write this down, make a story and tell it to people. I can hope that it will work ... I promise to write this, I am not sure if I can help more. Don't worry ... life will sort out!"

He said, "Yes! Write it ... and tell me where you write ... take me phone ... I am Johnny ...! Nice to meet you ... call me when you write it ... come Dean ...! ...Bye, Sir!... Hey! Sorry, I am idiot..."

I thought this was a country of opportunity, I realize now that it gives an opportunity only to make money. It had failed to provide opportunity to its own children to have a better education. As I was waiting for the bus, just across from the Greyhound stop, I realized that some 12 and 13 year old kids had learnt to French kiss even before they could spell the word. Johnny was drunk, he was drugged,

he was disorderly and yet he was sober; he chose to apologize, he chose to admit his ignorance, he wanted education. The very sober appearing gentlemen who play the game of check and mate of race and power seem more inebriated to me; they have never been apologetic about compromising education.

As my thoughts reconciled towards how messed up my judgment was, I realized that even I had forgotten to apologize to him. I was still learning to become a human. This is neither an experience nor just a moment that I wanted to pen down - it is execution of my promise to Johnny - and my apology to the life I met on a chilly evening in a park at Kennedy Plaza in Rhode Island.

When my bus arrived, my focus fell back on her... she was still busy "un" learning things. I wish I had the courtesy to walk down to the lady on the bench across me, and tell her that the lesson of "un" learning will give more pain ... and so I went back to my coffee, with 'cream' this time, and I thought to myself "No matter what color the coffee be, the essence is the same!"

*Charanjeet Singh  
'99 batch*

## Meet CJ

### Our Newest Co-Editor

Charanjeet Singh ('99), when asked, describes himself as "Malcolm in the middle" of this editorial board. Ever since his conception, the permutations inclined themselves in his favor. He barely managed to get an admission to the medical college, but later the entire cosmos



conspired to make others scoreless and make him the Best Graduate of his batch (so say his batch mates). He tried his hand at poetry as a school kid and ever damp Punjab Literary Academy found more water to pour at its weathering walls. He made some sullen contributions to the glorious "Glimpse" and thankfully shirked the offer to be its student editor (We did not need any more of gloom).

Because of his frequent disruption of the code of the message board, CJ, by draw of luck has been chosen the next editor of GMCCOSA. After finishing his MBBS, he decided to give some rough time to the USMLE, and these days can be frequently seen torturing interviewers throughout the US. Our trusted GPS also documented signs of his activity at St. George's University, Grenada (WI) since August 2006. He has been found delivering pathologically motivated, necrotic lectures and demonstrating malignant pictures, thus making students irreparably translocated. His non-pathological and illiterate crimes include hashing, hiking, wind-surfing, reading, fishing (in all senses of the word), watching cricket (he confesses to be a born-spectator) and listening to music.

## Re-unions

Chicago 2007: Surabhi ('95), Saloni ('96) and Rajbir ('96) with their spouses, Rohit, Raman and Rajinder.



## Kudos

...to Sandeep Kochar ('93), for starting as Clinical Assistant Professor in Hospital Medicine, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, New York, USA.

...to Sachin Verma ('99), for starting as Senior House Officer, Mount Isa Base Hospital, Mount Isa, Queensland, Australia.

## Re-Connection

*GMCCites who stumble upon GMCCOSA!*

...Dr Ashwani Kapila, he was a faculty in Ophthalmology at GMCH; he is currently in Nottingham, UK.

...Harpreet Singh ('91), he is an Assistant Professor in Forensic Medicine at the MM Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Ambala, Haryana.

...Ramandeep Singh ('91), he is a Medical Officer (Medicine) at Civil Hospital, Gurdaspur, Punjab.

...Veena Goyal ('92), she is a Specialist Registrar in Obstetrics and Gynecology at Luton and Dunstable Hospital NHS Trust, Luton, UK.

...Nitin Garg ('95), he is presently preparing for his PG entrance exams.

## Stork Line

...Sarina was born to Surmeet ('91) and Jay Bedi in August 2007.



## Congratulations

...to Kamal Sharma and Pooja, both from '97 batch, for their wedding in November.

...to Amit Gupta and Shilpa Goyal, both from '99 batch, for their wedding in November.

...to Chirag Ahuja and Deeksha Katoch, both from '99 batch, for their wedding in October.

...to Veerish Chauhan ('99) and Megha Vaid, for their wedding in December.



Mark your calendars for Euphoria 2008. For more details, visit [www.Euphoria2008.com](http://www.Euphoria2008.com).



# Album

Gursewak Singh ('92) shared priceless photographs of his batch. More photographs are available at [www.gmccosa.org](http://www.gmccosa.org)



Pinjore, 1994



New Year eve, 1995



Pinjore, 1994



Shimla, 1995

**Editors:** Please send us photographs of your re-unions, parties, meetings, weddings, etc (anything) to [gmccosa@yahoo.com](mailto:gmccosa@yahoo.com).

## Join The Connections Editorial Board

We are looking for an editorial board member from the '05-'07 batches. He/she should have a penchant for writing and be willing to contribute articles to Connections periodically. Remuneration includes a sense of fulfillment, interaction with senior alumni and fame (at least within GMCH). Interested? Write to us at [gmccosa@yahoo.com](mailto:gmccosa@yahoo.com).

**Editorial Board:** Navneet Majhail ('91), Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA; Hemender Singh ('91), Marshfield, Wisconsin, USA; Sandeep Kochar ('93), New York, New York, USA; Charanjeet Singh ('99), Grenada, West Indies; Divyanshoo Rai Kohli ('03), Chandigarh, India.