

Connections - 2011

Bulletin of the Government Medical College Chandigarh Old Students Association (GMCCOSA)

From the Editors Desk

Navneet Majhail, 1991 batch

My parents were visiting us this summer and my father, who is an alumnus of Government Medical College Amritsar, decided to track down and reconnect with his hostel roommate and best friend from medical school. After graduation, my father had gone into the Army, while his friend had found his way to the United States. Both became involved in their careers and families, and lost track of each other. There was no internet then and Mark Zuckerberg (founder of Facebook) was not born yet. Snail mail was the only way to stay in touch and with frequent moves and busy lifestyles, there was no time for that.



All we knew was that his friend lived in the Detroit area. So I began sleuthing around using the help of my trusted sidekick, Google. Soon, we had an address, a phone number and also his friend's photographs to see. They connected by phone and soon, we had made plans to visit his friend in Detroit.

In July, they met for the first time in nearly 45 years. Needless to say, it was a very nostalgic moment. They were meeting after a 'lifetime' and age had obscured what they had probably looked like when they last saw each other in the 1960's. However, watching them interact, one could not tell that they not had been in touch all these years. Even though I, Rajni and the kids had never met him and his wife before, very soon even we were enveloped in their warmth and felt as though we had known them really well for a long time.

They had invited a few other classmates from their batch who also live in the Detroit area (pictured above). As the conversation started flowing, everyone began reminiscing their medical college days. I could have sworn they were talking about the 1990's, when I was at GMCH, and not their own time. The stories were the same - escapades in and outside class, tales about their teachers, class scandals. They did not come out as well settled individuals and accomplished physicians; instead, it was more like a bunch of boys hanging out together. I could envision them all sitting together in a hostel room in their heydays doing the same. The only thing different now was their age.

With internet, social media and emails, it is now easy to stay connected with one another. But we still get lost in our daily travails - work, family, children - and cannot find time to keep up with our friends (I admit of being guilty of this as well). Seeing my father and his friend interact was a good reminder to me about friendships that last a lifetime and never go stale. It also brought back to mind a quote that one of my best friends from GMCH, Nitin Mittal, once said in a rare melancholic moment, "You only make friends in college, after that you just make colleagues".

So as I always say, stay connected and keep in touch...

GMCH Turns 20!

GMCH has come a long way since September 9th 1991, when the first batch step foot in the Prayas Building in Sector 38. If we consider students past and present (including the 2011 batch), roughly 1000 students have passed through its doors. Graduates have entered the national and international workforce (at least in 10 countries that we are aware of) in the healthcare, pharmaceutical, health management, public health and civil services fields. If we compare ourselves to other stalwarts of medical education in the country (e.g. AIIMS, JIPMER), we still have long ways to go. So fellow GMCHites, keep excelling at what you do, let your knowledge and work ethic do GMCH proud, and keep connected with us at GMCCOSA!

Here is an article from the first issue of Connections (January 2004), reflecting on the first day of GMCH! You can find more nostalgic articles about GMCH at <http://gmccosa.org/GMCchronicles.htm>.

GMC - The First Day

Hemender Singh, 1991 batch (from January 2004 Issue of Connections)

September 1991 - It was a bright and vibrant day and a great day indeed for a bunch of 50 fresh plus two graduates as they gathered outside that monolithic Prayas building in sector 38. The Prayas building itself was then under construction with only the lower three floors ready for use. By eight in the morning the whole building probably had a strength of 70 people, including the faculty and junior and office staff, and that was all GMC (then called CMC - Chandigarh Medical College) could boast of as strength. "Well, probably that's all we need", we thought as we gingerly took our first steps up the five story building (the building was not to have an elevator for another 2 years). Those moments were great as each of us thought that he or she was going to change the shape of medicine on the planet.

Everything in the building was brand new, complete with a set of brand new students shuffling uncomfortably in spotless white new lab coats to a set of brand new teachers. A new lecture hall had hurriedly been put together for accommodating the new batch. There were fifty chairs in the room (of course, no tables) and the chairs were marked Government College for Men Chandigarh, proudly declaring their allegiance to their Alma. But the podium was brand new, which Dr Chopra, with his infectious smile and hawkish eyes readily occupied. He welcomed everybody and all the kids clapped. It was getting to be so much fun. He then introduced the faculty - an entire group consisting of seven people - two each in Anatomy and Biochemistry and three in Physiology. There were multiple rounds of applause for everybody and then the "ceremony" ended and the first day of GMC started.

Enter Dr. Bharti, then head of Biochemistry, who later over the months became more popular for her hairstyle and demeanor than her expertise over her subject. The first thing she did was make all of us sit in rows according to our roll numbers - sounded very reasonable and organized at that time - but now in retrospect reflects the vanity of our atomic origin. "This is the only day when you will smile. The only other day in MBBS when you will smile is when you graduate." she retorted.

As the day unfolded we were bundled up into batches and exported into the dissection hall and laboratories. The labs were, of course, in the process of being established and the only thing that faintly resembled an academic institutional setup was the blackboard on the wall. But of course we were all fresh and young and so we enjoyed the experience of sitting on the floor for our classes. We were soon exposed to the perils of Dr Jaswinder Kaur, then head of Anatomy (to be popularly known as JK and then occasionally more colorful names) and our initial experience itself defined the agony of the endless humiliation in the dissection hall in the days to come.

After shuffling through the various lectures and labs we finally made it to the end of the day and as we trudged down the stairs none of us realized the impact of the tumultuous years that lay ahead of us. We have

come a long way since then with a unique set of bitter-sweet experiences, with struggles ranging from getting a water cooler installed to getting the college listed in the WHO list of internationally recognized medical schools. All these experiences have gone a long way in carving our personalities. And now, in retrospect, I still cherish the joy and pleasure I experienced that day on being a part of a new institution - a feeling that has never been surpassed to this date.

Career Series: Preparing for Indian PG and USMLE

Harshabad Singh and Divyanshoo Kohli, 2003 batch

GMCCOSA organized a talk and panel discussion on the various aspects of USMLE, residency, research, Indian PG and the varied aspects of the college life. The afternoon started off with a well-researched talk by Harshabad Singh (2003 batch). He drew on his experience as a researcher and residency applicant while explaining the varied vagaries of the US residency application. His presentation was essentially geared towards current students who had decided to pursue residency in the US. The presentation is available on the GMCCOSA website www.gmccosa.org.

Reading List for Indian PG Entrance	
Anatomy	ACROSS
Biochemistry	
Physiology	
Forensic medicine	
Pathology	Pulse publication
Microbiology	Pulse publication
Pharmacology	Sparsh Gupta
Eye	ACROSS
ENT	Sakshi Arora
SPM	Pulse publication
Medicine	Amit Ashish
Surgery	
Gynecology and Obstetrics	No book required
Pediatrics	Pulse publication
Skin	ACROSS
Radiology	
Anesthesia	
Psychiatry	
Orthopaedics	
Must Do	
Amit Ashish	Past 10 year papers
Mudit Khanna	with explanation
For PGIMER entrance	
Manoj Chaudhary	Past year papers
PA Chowdhary	from 2006 onwards

List provided by Ankita Aggarwal (2004 batch) who obtained 4th rank in AIIMS PG Entrance Exam

Aman gupta (2003 batch), Aakash Aggarwal and Shubhi Aggarwal (both 2004 batch) dwelled on their experiences as residency applicants and gave tips on approaching the USMLE steps. Romika Dhar Raina (2000 batch) provided a different perspective for applicants intending to pursue Psychiatry in the US. Shubhi provided leads on targeting Neurology training programs. Their inputs buttress the fact that internal medicine should not be thought of as the only option for physicians going to the US.

The aspects of doing research were brought into focus by Harshabad and Aakriti Gupta (2005 batch) who provided insights into searching for research positions. Shruti aggarwal (2006 batch) and Kalyani Kansal (2007 batch) were present to answer queries for students in the early years of MBBS and were looking to pursue research electives or taking the USMLE steps during the MBBS instead of the end of internship.

Ankita Aggarwal (2004 batch) and Vishal Jindal (2005 batch) held the fort while sharing their mantra for success in the Indian PG. That was the first time that GMCCOSA had broadened the scope of these talks to cater to those preparing for residency in India. Their talks focused on the different set of books needed to succeed in the different national and regional entrance exams faced by the students. A complete list of books recommended by them is included in this issue (see box) and will also be available at www.gmccosa.org.

The talk and discussion stretched for over 4 hours. These were followed by a breakout session of small group discussions with one senior and a couple of students in each group. The aim was to have a more informal and interactive forum for discussion. The evening wound up with a big cheer and roar of applause for Anuj Sharma (2007 batch), the GMCCOSA editor-cum-everything man who made such a spectacular session

possible. He spread the word and obtained all the necessary permissions and equipment for the session. Most importantly, he got food and drinks for all the delegates (ahh ... the delights of a hot *samosa* with *chai*).

Some dominant themes emerged and there was broad agreement among panelists over most of the topics brought up by the students. For starters, the excellent turnout during the holiday season showed just how serious students were about the future path they wanted to pursue. There was intense curiosity about the pros and cons about which place would be better for residency. The consensus was that no one can decide for the other about where one should do residency. A one-size-fits-all policy cannot be of use in a scenario of diverse interests. We recommend that the students should consider the financial implications of coming to the US. Also, it is always beneficial to discuss these issues with parents while making an independent decision.

Do not decide on a particular path based on how 'easy' it is. By now, all of us would have realized that medical sciences were never meant for the weak-hearted and that hard work and devotion are critical ingredients in succeeding in our profession.

As some of the current students have shown, it is feasible to take the USMLE Step 1 in the Third Prof (I) when the burden of studies is lighter. If financial constraints are manageable, a research or clinical elective in the United States can be of use.

For aspirants of the Indian PG, it was recommended that MCQ preparation should be started during MBBS itself and all the subjects should be studied/revised during internship. It was advised that students should target a single entrance exam (PGI/ GMCH/ All India) and prepare extensively for it.

The GMCCOSA thanks all the students and alumni who came together for the talk. We solicit your suggestions for the future talks and invite you to participate as resource persons as well. Further, continue to send us updates about yourself (marriage, kids, grand kids, elopement, reunions, etc.) for sharing with others.



Harshabad talking about USMLE options and breakout sessions

More photographs of this seminar are available on [Facebook](#)

Click [Here](#) to Connect with GMCCOSA on Facebook



Congratulations

Varun Aggarwal ('98) got married to Minakshi
 Purva Khandelwal ('99) was blessed with twins
 Garima and Mohit Bansal (both '00) became parents
 of Nayesha
 Pooja Dhir Bhayana ('01) was blessed with a girl
 Amisha Sidhu ('01) got married

Simran ('01) got married
 Amit Bansal ('02) got engaged
 Neha Goel ('02) got married
 Mandeep and Mitesh Bedi (both '02) got married
 Nishant Saini ('03) got married to Jyoti
 Priyanka and Ashish Bansal (both '03) got engaged



College romances budding into lifetime bonding. Pictured here are Garima and Mohit Bansal (extreme left and right, both from 2000 batch) and Priyanka and Ashish Bansal (center; both 2003 batch). Ashish and Mohit both did their MBBS from GMCH and MS Ophthalmology from PGIMER. Priyanka is pursuing MD OBGYN at PGIMER and Garima is wrapping up her MD Anatomy at GMCH.

My Experience with Tuition Centers

Karan Sood, 2008 batch

"The only pressure I'm under is the pressure I've put on myself" Mark Messier

"My parents keep telling me that I am not working hard enough. They compared my study schedule with the neighbor's son saying that he puts in at least 10 hours while I study only 6. This is affecting my confidence and making me insecure." This was a call made by a child to the helpline of a civil hospital. The doctors talked to his parents and explained what their son needed was their moral support. Nearly 325 students called the helpline just before the day of a medical school entrance exam. The primary concern was memory lapses and lack of concentration while thinking about the pressure of parent and teacher expectations.

I personally chose science for reasons of passion; but in order to get into medical school the next thing I did was look up coaching institutes. I was lucky enough to be guided by the best coaching centers in the city. The strangest experience was that I had to prepare myself for an entrance examination to get admission into one of these coaching centers. In short, they first choose candidates from whom they can expect a good performance and then take credit for that performance.

In 11th grade, a lot of time was spent going from one coaching institute to another, trying to figure out which tuition center to go to and when; did I have a test or was there an arduous assignment that I has forgotten

about. While I was trying to learn more so that I could lessen the pressure, all these other things actually increased my stress.

Most of the journey was slow, and perplexing. Almost every day, I was in dilemma about what was I trying to achieve, whether it was about grades or was it about knowledge. The dilemma was resolved when a teacher, just before the exams told us that the competition at the coaching centre was just a small percent of what was going to be asked in the exam. Since his coaching center was really good and he had put us through surprise exams and made us do goal oriented study, we would be fine. In short, although coaching centers claim to have divine guide books, they are not really divine – it is our own fear that makes them seem such.

Finally, after making it to medical college I felt glad that the coaching days were over. But it seems that courtesy of ever increasing “quotas” and with new medical schools blooming in every other city, the numbers of medical graduates have increased for the number of available postgraduate spots, and a new trend of coaching is gaining popularity among medical students. Various organizations have arranged courses for MBBS graduates to prepare for postgraduate entrance tests. Many students take up coaching for both USMLE and Indian PG and apparently the trend is actually showing good results. For Indian PG this year, many students cracked the exams in their internship. The trend is also visible for students who choose USMLE. In the past, average time a student would take to get into residency was 2 years after completion of MBBS and now it is less than a year. More than coaching, I believe our seniors are the best guide and that’s what the recent workshop by GMCCOSA did. It included a talk on USMLE and Indian PG and created more awareness for the aspirants. GMCCOSA has made many efforts and has published articles such as orientation to the USMLE, all of which are available at www.gmccosa.org

Residency and Whereabouts Updates

Hemender Singh ('91) joined as Instructor in Nephrology and is pursuing advanced training in Interventional Nephrology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, USA

Navneet Majhail ('91) has joined as Medical Director and Director of Health Services Research at the National Marrow Donor Program, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA; he will continue as Adjunct Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of Minnesota

Sandeep Gill ('91) is Associate Professor, Physiology, Adesh Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Bhatinda, Punjab

Shikha Tuli ('94) has joined as Resident, Internal Medicine, Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, USA

Rajbir Gulati ('96) has joined as Fellow, Rheumatology, Cedars Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, California, USA

Varinder Dhaliwal ('99) has matched for Hematology-Oncology fellowship (starting 2012) at University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Little Rock, Arkansas, USA

Adarsh Sai ('01) has joined as Resident, Internal Medicine, Loma Linda University Medical Center, Loma Linda, California, USA

Sannidhya Verma ('01) is Senior Resident, Psychiatry, PGIMER, Chandigarh

Himanshu Gupta ('01) has started DM Cardiology at AIIMS, New Delhi

Vidhu Dhawan ('01) became Senior Resident in Anatomy, VMMC, New Delhi

Sonal Gupta ('03) is PG Junior Resident, Obstetrics and Gynecology, GMCH 32, Chandigarh

Ankita Aggarwal ('04) is PG Junior Resident, Radiology, AIIMS, New Delhi

Lippi Uppal ('04) is PG Junior Resident, Obstetrics and Gynecology, PGIMER, Chandigarh

Henna Garg ('04) is PG Junior Resident, Ophthalmology, GMCH 32, Chandigarh

Sidharth Garg ('04) is PG Junior Resident, Surgery, PGIMER, Chandigarh

Mohit Bhutani ('05) is PG Junior Resident, ENT, GMCH 32, Chandigarh

Plexus 2011

Plexus 2011 was organized by 2009 batch. Over the years, Plexus, the intra-GMCH fest has gotten bigger, brighter and better. GMCCOSA congratulates the organizers for a splendid show and wishes the future editions of Plexus all the very best.



Reunions



The united colors of GMCH: Seniors and juniors, role models and aspirants, veterans and wannabes, students and alumni blending together! Pictured here are GMCHites from batches 2000 through 2010. Go GMCH; Go GMCCOSA!

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