

Connections

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

This Land is My Land

Sandeep Kochar, 1993 batch

(Eds: Sandeep is a member of the GMCCOSA editorial board - he often muses about medicine, his travels, his observations and life in general on his blog - [LIFE CALLING](#). Below is a recent blog of his ...)

It's the biweekly chart fair - a misleadingly pleasant term for the dreaded but necessary duty of physicians signing off on charts that are missing signatures and necessary documentation - and I am besieged by a wall of three rows of charts. I groan inwardly: it's going to take at least an hour or two.

I had arrived early and am the only one in the room in addition to a woman from the medical records division. Just then Dr. L. saunters in and greets me genially. We haven't met in a while and dutifully exchange a few pleasantries: we don't work together but run into each other all the time and have a cordial professional relationship. Dr. L. is lanky, slim, at least a decade older than me, and has a pleasant personality with an easy-going manner. I like him.

"So Kochar, how many medals did your country win in the London Olympics," asks Dr. L.

I almost blurt the answer out. But then I pause for a moment.

"We did pretty good Dr. L. We won 46 gold medals".

"Oh yeah?!" Dr. L. sounds surprised and taken aback. He peers up from a chart in which he has been scribbling a signature. "What country is that?" queries Dr. L., sounding genuinely puzzled.

"USA," I say nonchalantly.

"Oh! Oh! Oh! I see!" mumbles Dr. L. hastily, sounding embarrassed, and looks back into the chart, avoiding eye contact.

I feel bad for Dr. L. I get it and I know what he means.

I have made a similar *faux pas* before when I have assumed that someone is from another country. Given how diverse the USA is in term of its population, it's easy for a first-generation immigrant to assume that someone else is also one.

In my earlier fresh-off-the-boat days in America (Ok, so FOB may be a derogatory term, but *yaar* we can all laugh at ourselves a bit, no? I mean FOB in the end is just a bunch of letters, like ABCD...).

So, anyway, I was saying...in my earlier years in America when questions of visas still swirled in my brain like an unruly wind and letters still plagued me - H, J, O and what not - I once asked a colleague in my residency program:

"E., what visa are you on?"

She gave a look that froze me and said quietly but emphatically:

"Sandeep, I was born in California. I am an American citizen. I am NOT on a visa."

**This is the 27th issue of Connections! Read the first ever issue of [Connections \(Jan 2004\) HERE](#)
Check out the [CONNECTIONS link on gmccosa.org](#) for archived issues**

I was mortified and avoided her for the next couple of weeks. Eventually I think she forgave me.

Like I said, I like this man, Dr. L. I know how he must be feeling: whenever my mind harks back to aforementioned encounter with Dr. E. I get a queasy feeling in my stomach and all hot behind my ears. I furtively look around to see if E. is nearby, glaring at me. *Still after all these years.*

"It's ok Dr. L. I know what you meant. You see, I became a US citizen just about a year ago. India does not allow dual citizenship so I had to give up my Indian nationality".

Dr. L. looks up. He smiles weakly, clears his throat, and gives a thin laugh.

Poor guy, he is still hurting. It's OK though, he will get over it. I did my part to make him feel better.

Seriously though, I think to myself, I actually have to thank him. Sometimes the the most simplest and innocent of questions can serve to remind you - mostly in a nice sort of way - how something so fundamental about you has changed.

Plexus 2012

Urvi Kapoor, 2010 batch



It was one of the most fun times of 2nd Prof when the entire batch came together and brought to life ideas which had been growing in our minds for the last 1 year when we had seen our seniors do the same... once the theme of plexus - which this time was the return of the ice age was finalized, the creative minds started to design the look of plexus that they were to showcase ... while some others started looking for sponsorship and collecting money needed to bring the big ideas to life ...while there were some others who started to think of all the events and all the new ways to modify the same so as to do something better than what we had seen (well how it turned out to be is a different story).

So with this we started working to bring to life the return of the ice age. The decoration work gave us all a chance to try our hands at painting and all the creative stuff while the ones actually doing it gave us just stern looks ... all in all we created a beautiful picture of the ice age with an igloo and snow monsters and snow everywhere.

Since doing something new has become such a trend we introduced what was known as the pre-plexus party to plexus ... plexus is always a fun platform to see the newcomers go on stage hoping that their talent is going to be appreciated but they come to terms with the ugly truth which is that no one cares what you are doing up there.

All in all it is a refreshing break before we face the horrors of 2nd Prof exams.

MORE PHOTOS OF PLEXUS 2012, GO TO [FACEBOOK!](#)

Vigyan Ratna Award for Prof Harsh Mohan

Prof Harsh Mohan was conferred Haryana Vigyan Ratna award in May of this year by Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda. He was among the four eminent scientists selected for this honor for 2010-2011.

In Conversation with Dr Roosy Aulakh

Anuj Sharma, 2007 batch

Maintaining the ever delicate balance of beauty & brains, Dr Roosy Aulakh is currently an Assistant Professor with the Dept. of Paediatrics at GMCH CHD. Hailing from 1997 batch she is among the brightest alumni of our college. With a record 19 medals including best graduate, her academic profile remains one of the best in the history of GMCH. Still, with a simplistic attitude she aims for working hard for the welfare of the institution. Lets check out to what she has to say on the issues regarding college & alumni.



Good evening ma'am. Please let us know about your academic journey so far....

I was a Carmelite till 10th. After scoring the highest scores in 10th, I joined 16's Model School for my 10+2. While most of the boys then managed to get admission in the DAV College 11, we had to suffer the brunt of both our school teachers and tuitions. Still, I managed to be the topper of the 3 states in the board exams and cleared the entrance thereafter. I did my MBBS from GMCH CHD joining the 97 batch. Thereafter, did my MD in paediatrics from CMC Ludhiana. Then, pursued my senior residency from PGIMER where I spent 3 yrs in the neurology unit. Then, I had a good experience in the private set up. Later, I joined GMCH as a consultant with designation as an Assistant Professor.

That has indeed been a splendid career. Keeping all this in mind we would like to know about your college life. Were you totally into books or did you excel in various co curricular events too?

Well, MBBS is always a memorable period of your life. Surely, I used to be regular in studies. For me, every test, stage, viva would come as if the world is going to end. I still remember Dr Arora (Anatomy) showed my answer sheet to our seniors, as I had filled in 18 extra sheets. But then, college life has been memorable. Seeing the current Plexus few days before reminds me of the time when I had participated with one of my senior's and now my husband, Dr. Nishant Sachdev (96 batch). We were both surprised to see the juniors dance and speak so confidently during this year's plexus. Our necks were always flexed out of fear in front of seniors then. Time has changed and I do surely like this transition.

Earlier you used to be a student, now how does it feel like sitting besides your previous professors. Also, please share with us any interesting incident from your college life.

Let me tell you the truth, I am still scared the moment I have to interact with them. During an Independence Day function I was too nervous even to shake hands with Dr. Raj Bahadur. Dr. Atul Sachdev, Dr. Gautam Dr. Kanchan ... all had been our teachers. Still now I prefer calling them through the office whenever we have to invite them for our staff meeting & department events.

About an incident ... as I mentioned before, for me the world would end before any test. Likewise, I had my pharmacology tute and I was studying KDT and other fellow reference books in the library. I did not sleep that entire night. Next day, the day of tute, went again to the library after my clinical attendance. Feeling tired and sleepy I was coming down through the ramp for the evening class

when I suddenly fainted and fell and rolled all through the whole floor. Thankfully, there was a railing there besides which I was spotted and taken to the emergency. Of course, I missed the tute, but then had a class with Dr. Kak (DP) & my parents in his office.

You did your internship here. How did you manage the work pressure along with your entrance exam studies?

I remember that I was still hanging around in the emergency till 31st December. We then had to double the work since we did not have many PG's around. Personally, I feel internship is the period when you start developing interest in specialities. I remember few batch mates who would come to put sutures and tractions even beyond their duty hours. Now, they are established orthopaedicians & surgeons.

What have been your areas of interest in the field of paediatrics? Please let us know about some of your work so far.

I had a good amount of experience in the field of paediatric neurology during my senior residency in PGI. Currently I am working in opening up of specialty neurology clinic in the department. We are preparing performas for keeping follow up of neurocysticercosis & epilepsy patients. Maintaining records from now will surely help us 10 yrs down the line. We also successfully enrolled for the paediatrics quiz for the PGs this time. Being my parent institute, there does come that feeling of patriotism inside. You work harder for your institute so that it can shine amongst the best in the country.

What are your views on pursuing research during the undergraduate period?

I would stress hard that we need to establish ourselves in research activities during this period. If students are interested, we can establish a collaboration with PGI for various workshops on evidence based methods and research methodology. It is better if one is at least introduced to the various parameters used and the way trials are conducted right from the time of MBBS. Research ethics has come up in a very big way. I think students must come up for the same. It has added benefits for those aiming for the USMLE and even in governmental bodies where a strong academic base is desired.

What message would you like to give to our students?

I would say that in our times there was not much awareness amongst us. Belonging to a 1st generation doctor's family there are many things you realise were just a waste of effort. Targeted approach is the key. One should keep himself/herself informed about the various options and scope ahead in life. Many people do numerous speciality courses and fellowships but the same should be done keeping in mind the demand. One needs to decide where one would like to settle. Or else, the whole process will land you in frustration. Also I would say that one should take pride in one's own institution and should work harder for its welfare.

Lastly, being a part of the alumni, do you have reunions with your friends?

Well I and my husband, both belong to GMCH. So, we usually meet our friends, although it gets weird when I call his friends even now "SIR" (Laughs!).

GMCH: A Look Back Into Time

Divyanshoo Kohli, 2003 batch

(Eds: Divyanshoo's essay was originally published in the 2012 issue of the GMCH magazine Glimpse)

As the Independence Day of India rolled by, I read an interesting series of article on the state of the country that looked back at the past 65 years of the country. It was an instructive reading, at times critical, at times sentimental and occasionally comical. It is in a similar vein that I pen down these thought regarding the state of GMCH over the past 22 years.

We began way back in September 1991 in a rented building that was still under construction. Much like the students who reach the class 10 minutes too late and asks around softly for 'an extra pen' and prays for the good humor of the attending, we too were on a borrowed existence teetering on the precipice of failing. The stools that the students sat on were marked for Government College for Men-11, the building was for mentally challenged children (poetic!), the specimens were from PGIMER! The hostel of GMCH students was in the engineering college in sector 12. Even the director was on a loan from PGI and the patients were seen at the poly clinic in sector 22! The faculty had been hurriedly assembled from any place feasible. Like a newly born, we were dependent for everything on everyone.

Like the famed Indian approach to things we began with nothing, survived with sheer luck and blossomed through sheer perseveration despite the powers that were. Getting a letter of recognition for the medical college had all the ingredients of steep uphill battle that remind me of the '83 victory of Kapil Dev or VVS Laxman's terrific score against Australia. Some of the old timers recall going on hunger strikes and shuttling between Chandigarh and New Delhi in a desperate attempt fighting an obdurate and insensitive bureaucracy that was beholden to the letter but blind to the spirit of the law. We owe it to the members of the initial batch who fought for their own and our good.

As the decade rolled by, things began to gather pace (or thereabouts!). After a series of false starts, the building of the hospital was inaugurated. The Prayaas building, our rented home in sector 38, got completed. The current students would not be able to appreciate the open hallways and the dreadful anatomy halls complete with a feeling of freedom that characterized that place. We ended up moving from sector 38 to sector 32 a few years back. Earlier, the first and second year students often commuted from 38 to 32 for college functions. Some of those innocuous trips have actually ended up in wedlock! The hostels for boys and girls were constructed; the emergency started functioning as did the ICUs. I was still around when the C-block was inaugurated and we would often lose our way in that labyrinth. Soon, the D-block came into being as well.

Through these years the college, the hospital, its faculty and students grew in numbers, strength and stature. We held convocations, organized national and international conferences one of which was graced by the former president Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam.

The strength of our college and hospital has been to a huge extent the faculty that has guided us from strength to strength as we scaled from peak to peak. A lot of the original faculty members stayed with GMCH - Drs. Atul Sachdev, Jagdish Chander, Ram Singh, SMS Lehl, AK Attri, Harsh Mohan, Kanchan Kapoor, Rajeev Sharma, Suman Kochhar among others. However, some incredibly talented people left early as well: Drs. Krishan Vij, KK Gombar, AS Bawa, Robby George among others. While the reasons they left were myriad, their loss was monumental and absence felt acutely. Any hospital is the sum of the talent of its physicians and talent retention is incumbent on the administration.

The brand ambassadors of the college are always going to be its students. In this context, the college is well-endowed. Consistently, the students entering the MBBS course have been the top-rankers and

crème-da-le-crème of the tri-state area. We have also consistently shone brightly in the national PG entrance exams of PGIMER, CBSE and AIIMS. I vividly remember the time 2 years ago when my mother had to undergo a hysterectomy at PGI. To my intense surprise and undisguised relief, every single resident in that particular Gynecology unit was from GMCH (including 2 from my batch itself)! If demographics are anything to go by, the residency class of OBGYN there is dominated by the girls of GMCH. Interestingly, some of the students have gone in a full circle and have joined the hospital as faculty - a truly joyous feeling of accomplishment!

The success story of the students in the US is self-perpetuating. We have excelled in the USMLEs and are starting to create a name. As an example, during my interviews in the USA that were spread all along the east and Midwest, I had to pay for accommodation only once! Everywhere else, there was someone from GMCH who opened the doors for me and let me stay overnight. I have no relatives in the US but still feel that help is only a phone call away. For a lot of my friends, the experience has been the same.

A matter of pride for all of us has been the newspaper stories of our students excelling in the civil services exams. Our students have gone into services as diverse as the Indian army medical corps, the IAS and even the corporate world. There have been some blemishes on this count as well. The recent spate of suicides among the younger lot has been a matter of intense shame and introspection. All our glory and accomplishments fade away when one of our own goes down so tragically.

All in all the students and faculty have worked hard to reach where we are. It is easy to bask in the glory of the bygone days and let the nostalgia sweep us under its dizzying influence. It would however be futile to pat ourselves on the back and enter into a state of inertia. Much like our nation, we have worked a lot to awaken, break the shackles and cobwebs, and gather pace as we race ahead. The time though, is to fly.

Residency Updates

Dinkar Bhasin (06) MD Medicine AIIMS, NEW DELHI

Ankush Cugh (06) MD Paediatrics PGIMER, CHANDIGARH

Alpana Garg (06) MD OBS and GYNE PGIMER, CHANDIGARH

Renu Ranga (06) MD OBS and GYNE PGIMER, CHANDIGARH

Ena Arora (06) MS Ophthalmology PGIMER, CHANDIGARH

Saloni Arora (06) MS OBS and GYNE GMCH, CHANDIGARH

Jyoti Diswal (06) MS Ophthalmology GMCH, CHANDIGARH

Nirupa Rama (06) MS Anesthesia GMCH, CHANDIGARH

Siddharth Puri (06) MS Anesthesia GMCH, CHANDIGARH

Kanika Arora (06) MS Anesthesia GMCH, CHANDIGARH

Akanksha Gautam (06) MD Medicine IGMC, SHIMLA

Dilpreet Kaur (05) MD Pathology GMCH, CHANDIGARH

Gaurav Raturi (02) MD Transfusion Medicine GMCH, CHANDIGARH

Murtaza Sumbul (05) MD Radiodiagnosis UCMS, DELHI

Shivani Kothiyal (05) MD OBS and GYNE KGMU, LUCKNOW

Nikhil Bansal (05) MS General Surgery SAFDARJANG HOSPITAL, NEW DELHI

Epitome of Life

We have quite a few bloggers among our alumni. Sandeep Sarpal (02 batch) authors a blog called "[Epitome of Life](#)". After a brief hiatus, he is back in action!! Check out his blog for some of his musings about life and on being a doctor.

Join the GMCCOSA Editorial Board

We are looking for an energetic, motivated, and self-directed individual to join the GMCCOSA editorial board. This person should be a current student (1st through final year) at GMCH. He/she should have a penchant for writing. Previous experience with writing is a plus, but not required. Benefits include interaction with the best and brightest alumni of GMCH. To learn more about this job, contact Anuj Sharma (07 batch). If interested in this position, contact us at gmccosa@yahoo.com with a short note about why you are the best candidate for this job.

Public Health Project Award

Do you have a fantastic idea for a project that will improve public health and impact a community? Write to us. You have to be a current student at GMCH to be eligible for this award. We will fund up to Rs 15,000 for 1-2 projects for one year with the possibility of continuing funding for additional years. Write to Sandeep Kochar at skochar_25@yahoo.com for more details.

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