

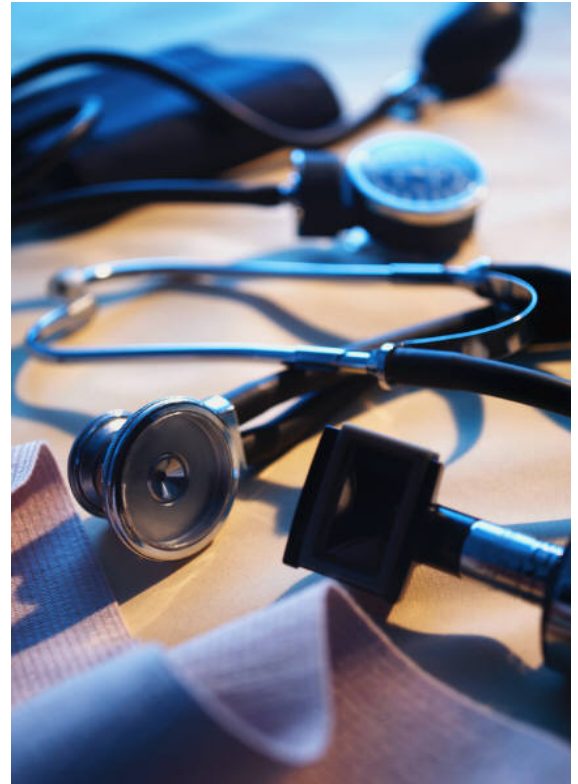
Connections

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

Physician, Heal Thyself

Navneet Majhail, 1991 batch

On a recent trip to India, I had several experiences which highlighted how medicine has become more of a business and less of a science/art of healing in our country. I had heard several anecdotes about this, but personal interactions with the Indian healthcare system during this trip drove the point home. Don't get me wrong, with the time and effort we invest in obtaining the coveted MBBS, MD/MS and DM/MCh degrees, we are entitled to earning a decent livelihood. However, in my experience, for more than a few of my colleagues, the pursuit of money has blurred the lines of what is ethical and what is blatantly wrong. I list below some practices I observed or heard of which I believe are deliberate and directly or indirectly harm patients. And I will emphasize that this does not generalize the practice of medicine in India and many of our physician colleagues do follow the tenets of the Hippocratic Oath they swore by as they set foot into the world as healers. But at the same time, it is clear that these practices are fairly prevalent and are considered a norm and there is an attitude of ambivalence surrounding them.



First and foremost, is the prescription of a drug, procedure or intervention that is not indicated. Some examples where this has the potential to cause major harm or even death that I am personally aware of include unnecessary surgeries and procedures and transfusion of red cells/platelets when they are not needed. For instance, I was asked to give an opinion on a patient where a bone marrow transplant was being insisted upon, but was clearly not indicated. I am aware of anecdotes where, to rack up hospitalization charges, intravenous medications were given when they were not needed, or given more frequently than required or given when an effective oral alternative was available.

Then there are practices which may not severely harm patients but are nevertheless unethical. Some examples include performance of laboratory and radiology tests when they are not required, unnecessary referrals to get a financial "cut", insistence on more expensive services when it is perceived that a patient is well off (e.g., ICU care instead of general ward care), hospitalization or extension of hospital stay when it is not indicated, and the improper use of medications (e.g., anabolic steroids or corticosteroids for a variety of maladies).

**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**

Another practice of questionable ethics is the use of pharmaceutical industry (“drug rep”) funds to attend medical conferences. One might argue that this might be the only financial means for some physicians to keep abreast with medical advances. However, a line has to be drawn somewhere. A few years ago, I met a cardiologist attending a bone marrow transplant conference in Hawaii – on a pharmaceutical company sponsored all expenses paid trip. Needless to say, he was not seen at the venue after the first few hours of the conference opening. His “vacation” was likely a reward for drugs he had prescribed or an incentive for the prescriptions he had the potential to write – some of which would not be needed by patients.

I can go on and on with this list. However, my intention here is not to catalog these practices. Instead, I hope we can start a discussion about them and think about solutions. At least from my experience in the United States, healthcare systems in developed countries are far from perfect. Many practices noted above occur here as well. However, the scope, magnitude and frequency of what I saw in India was mind boggling. Several checks and balances in the United States minimize these practices and instances of gross negligence are uncommon. I think it is time we think of at least some regulations in India as well.

What do you think about this issue? Share your thoughts at [facebook.com/GMCCOSA](https://www.facebook.com/GMCCOSA).

The Fun of Travel

Siddharth Duggal, 2011 batch

After an exhaustive entrance procedure and a hectic first year, the early part of second prof brings some respite. We had already tasted the evergreen Shimla in first year. Our fickle minds were acting as deterrents to coming at a resolution regarding our next travel. After many failed attempts at deciding about a final destination, we finally zeroed in on Manali. Still many things needed to be done including the herculean task of convincing all the boys to go!



We did manage to get 10 of us to come on board. The tempo traveler we hired had space for twelve and so the ride was comfortable. We finished our classes in the morning, finished off the necessary tasks and flagged off around noon. We were oblivious of all that transpired behind our backs in college. We were being made scapegoats for the lack of attendance in some professors’ lecture that day.

The journey to and from Manali too proved to be one of the most enjoyable parts of our journey. We were all geared up for the impending freshness in life that awaited

us. We managed to reach base i.e. Pandoh around 8:30 that night. The hospitality by Shreyak's relatives who were the owners of a hotel there was commendable. After a refreshing rest and the indispensable fun we were back on our journey early next morning. On reaching Manali we got down to choosing our lodgings. We ended up choosing a most modest one considering our financial constraints.

Later we travelled an hour uphill to the Naggar palace. A marriage ceremony was taking place and we found it difficult to dine there. So we ended up improvising like always with bread jam etc. We followed this with some trekking in the freezing cold. It had snowed a day earlier and the fresh snow did appear wonderful on the hills as we joked and laughed on our trek uphill. While some of us decided to indulge in some exotic drinks there, the rest either sulked or got down to clicking photos.



On the journey downhill, we were all in a dance mode and the nonsense chattering provided fuel to an enjoyable evening. When we reached back we were all still game for a trip to the Mall road. It wasn't as decorated as that in Shimla but it definitely had its own charm. The Chinese restaurant there was a welcome change from the staple Paneer-Dal routine. We were all excited to be there and were all geared up for the Solang valley and Rohtang valley trip the next day. Some careless fun followed before we all finally dozed off. No, not the like you might contemplate!

We had decided to get ready for travel early on Saturday. Still the delicious paronthas that we fed ourselves with did not help this seemingly impossible task. Braving the cold, we finally reached Solang. Here we were hounded by innumerable agencies wanting us to hire their Snow trucks. We managed to strike a good deal and thoroughly enjoyed the rides. The picturesque journey made it memorable. Next we found ourselves playing with some real snow that we touched for the first time with our bare hands. This was followed by some bargaining for ice-skiing and the climb to Rohtang while others of us were busy snow-fighting. In Rohtang, apart from the snow man making, the highlight was the chilling cold we felt on our wet clothes once the snow had melted. Finding a decent place to eat was a challenge. It was all worth it though.

On returning to our hotel, we were tired. Yet the thought that we had to return to the usual routine the next day made us strong. We left our rooms and were back on Mall road for some shopping.

The last day proved to be just as eventful as the others. We visited the iconic Hadimba temple first and decided to even experience the hot springs at Vashishta. They were both memorable parts of our journey. We had to forego visiting Manikaran; it wasn't a big sacrifice considering the arduous journey which accompanied it.

We were wary of what awaited us back home but we knew no one could take away the moments of laughter and joy and bonding together we had experienced. The memories will stay with us forever!

The MBBS Safari

Anuj Sharma, 2007 batch

“Babaji main paet (surgery) ka nahin haddi (ortho) ka doctor hoon.” “Agar jyada chik chik karni hai toh private hospital mein ilaaj krwa lo.” “23 number kamre se khoon ki shishi le ayo.” “Mataji main sisterji nahin doctor hoon.”

Visit the emergency or wards and you'll encounter a bunch of people screaming and yelling on patients, at the same time being screamed and yelled on by residents during rounds. One thing that connects these burdened, depressed but still well dressed people (dressing sense generally improves amongst girls during internship ... ahem ahem!) is a batch – better say *brand 2K7*.

I still remember my first day at this college. While standing on the stairs of the hostel, a super senior (rock star of his time ...) gave me his room keys and said, “15 minute mein room saaf hona chahiye, my parents are coming.” Of course, the command above was studded with the many not so decent words (keeping in mind the article, just being euphemist). Agonized and pissed, I cleaned up the whole room – but I still do remember those dirty rags under the bed (well, over the years I did realize how \$h!!#Y a boy hosteller's room can get). This was all part of “interaction” ... the “*personality development program*” we had ... the time when the utmost inner talent which even our parents were unaware about, was expressed right itself in the 1st month of our college life. Now, it is just the few glimpses we get during Plexus, Euphoria, sports meet, and not to miss the violent streak during dance parties, which makes us realize that we are GMCHITE's.

This cribbing can go on and on to keep you bored for the whole day. Still MBBS will undoubtedly remain the most memorable times of our lives. The times we reached our zenith and the time we went down into the drain. When, from no one we turned out to be someone.

Still under the addiction of writing answers in the exam – an art mastered by every medico anywhere, it'll be worthwhile listing the so called “marked” features of college life at GMCH.

- **Gossips** - D hall (especially the evening time), an hour before the clinic starts, post lecture canteen sessions and not to miss people awake late night in hostels. Come here and you'll listen to the most breaking facts and news about the people around. Still remember the 'Gossips@GMCH' on orkut which used to provide regular updates for some and nightmares for the others. Thankfully, this forum has fizzled out over time. For those who say they don't gossip ... reminds me of a saying which appropriately states that '90% of people gossip, the other 10 just lie.'
- **Sarai** - The place has its own enigma. Uninvited buffets at CME's and events such as Euphoria and Plexus surely make the place an integral part of our college time. Special mention of the 'water cooler' which has remained a silent witness to our exploits. In the name of drinking water, people would sneak a peep into the most eligible junior sitting in the next LT ... get their official 'red book' marked ... and more seniors in a hunt for the 'bakra' (mostly 'bakri') to get their files completed.
- **1st year** - “Yaar, mujhe apna brain pkda de.” “Teri body mein toh fat he fat hai.” “Aaj teri body par surface marking krte hain.” Although weird, this is the lingo we develop coming in the D hall. The memorable jaipur trip, elections for the ever vacant post of a CR, counting 'you see', a popular catch phrase of one of our teachers during the lecture, moments of black out during tutes and vivas, to the most awesome feeling after spending 3 hours answering 'brachial plexus' ... the 1st question of the upper limb grand stage ... 1st prof remains an unbeaten 1 year thriller movie.
- **Festivity Days** - For some it's the spirit of winning matches. For others it would be just standing on the barricade impressing the beautiful ladies for entry into the star night. These are the most electrifying days looked forward to by all (both in GMCH and surrounding colleges). The pirate cartoon on top of the lift

4th floor B block is a fossil of the beautiful dream we all lived in form of Plexus 09. The 'who lamhe' of the memorable Jal night in Euphoria'11 will echo in our ears till time endless. It makes me feel amazed and of course proud to say that from a batch were we didn't even have 10 players in a team, we were able to bring up a new football revolution in the form of GPL and yes, we were able to take the team for a stunning cricket Euphoria cup (the super over still gives that shocker in our spines).

- **Exams... Exams... Exams...** - September onwards - for the world it is the beginning of Fall, time to write beautiful odes, walking through the leaves. For us it's the raising of the siren ... when every move by the consultant is viewed as a trigger for 'supple' time. The whole racket of getting books marked and arranging question lists flourishes. The time when you literally have 10 causes for every damn thing (esp final prof). The last Practical day *fashion show* (very peculiar to our batch) - those never previously worn formals and salwaar kameez. After all, marks and clothes go hand in hand ... ahem, ahem.
- **Food** - Though way down the list, GMCH still has a few cuisines that need to be definitely tried by your taste buds. The A-block dahi samosa, kadi chawal and nimbu paani ... to the early morning bread rolls and freshly cooked pranthas in the snack bar. Sumis Café in the hostel premises too needs to be tried and the typical, "how was the food?" needs to be answered. One can also try eating mess food. Yes why not?? You may miss that too!

All in all, the whole journey has been truly cherishable. Memories we all will carry along. Also, not to miss our dear friend Manjot, who we missed out in the very beginning, for reasons not known ... and still known to all. A special mention of the brave lady who left the college in 1st year.

And last of all, I would like to share the ALTERED GANDHIJI's TALISMEN, we popularly saw in our NCERT books. Whenever you are caught with chits or a mobile phone during exams, whenever you are falling short of attendance, whenever you have committed a blunder in your vivas or whenever you banged into your professors car ... recall the face of the biggest, stupidest fellow from the batch 5 years senior to you (better come to boys hostel), then come to the realization that you yourself are as much of a big stupid person as he was. So, if he can pass out successfully, so can you. So dude, relax ...!



The 2K7 Batch!

The New Face of Hungry India

Divyanshoo Kohli, 2003 batch

A long lasting image of India and Indians embedded in the mind is that of hungry scrawny kids, face smeared in dirt and arms outstretched in desperation. I recently had the opportunity of travelling across the breadth of Punjab and Kerala and came back with a modified version of the great Indian hunger. The hunger is not anymore about food. The appetite is more aspirational than gastronomic. There is a burning desire to excel and succeed, irrespective of the lack of a pedigreed education or fancy MBAs. The young Indian is globally aware, industrious and brave enough to challenge conventional handicaps and does not consider a rural background as shameful.

I travelled to a small city of Aluva, about 15 miles away from Cochin, Kerala. Here, in this tiny remote township tucked away in the middle of nowhere, I came across firms designing and manufacturing solar panels for clients all over the globe. The nondescript board modestly proclaimed 'Doha', 'Dubai'. Intrigued, I asked the employees why Delhi/India did not figure on the advertisement. The answer was simple - they were not targeting the local businesses who would come after the foreign clients were reeled in. He did not seem concerned that his city, Aluva, was a tiny hamlet never heard of in the mainstream and far removed from any industrial hub of any importance.

As I travelled across Aluva and Cochin, past huge hoardings of David Beckham, Gisele Bundchen and Aishwarya Rai advertising the benefits of beauty products, the blur of milk-vends caught my eye. I casually asked a co-passenger on the bus about the milk vends and coconut water vendors dotting the picturesque landscape. I joked that this was in sharp contrast to the liquor shops (thekas) scarring the face of Punjab. He laughed and assured me that the 'mallu' love for the alcohol is equally strong, just better camouflaged!

Sangrur is a sleepy township in Punjab. Once a small princely estate, it is now part of the Sangrur district. Outside the district courts, over hot chai, samosas and chilled lassi, a young lawyer shared his views on the sorry state of the government administration. Much to the horror of the nation, a policeman had been shot dead by an armed ruffian. The assailant, still at large, was affiliated to the political party in power at the state. I was aware of the incident but had considered it as a one-off incident in an otherwise peaceful land. He punctured my illusions with a verbal tirade that had me searching for an answer. He pointed out that the shooting occurred steps from the police station. Terror is back in Punjab, he proclaimed, leaving me flabbergasted but unable to conjure a coherent response. The young Indian is very aware, very angry, very unforgiving and capable of hauling nostalgia-softened 'phoren' returned desi over the coals for being misinformed.

I asked him of his own plan for the future and he pointed in the direction of a visa facilitation center. He flicked aside my concerns about his halting and thickly accented English with a wave of his hand. If I could learn to practice law, he said with half-a-smile, I can master Mandarin! The black-coats around us shook with laughter. Europe and Canada have a vice like grip on the minds of the young. Unlike many of us, a professional degree, contacts, a healthy bank balance or even a helpful and influential alumni association are inconsequential in the quest for a better life.

In my interaction with fellow Indians, the most striking conversation I had was with a biologist from Jharkhand who is currently pursuing his doctoral dissertation. I had always considered myself as a struggler without a silver spoon who had risen to modest heights by the dint of my own courage and hard-work. I never considered myself a manor-born lord with chests of gold buried in the backyard. My thoughts were punctured by my friend who hailed from a more humble background. He recounted that he was so short of cash that he was forced to save on stationery in a unique manner. The most expensive component of writing, he explained matter-of-factly, was paper. He would scribble on paper with pencil, then later use an eraser and hence be able to reuse paper. After 4 such cycles, the paper would become flimsy and too friable. He would then use a blue pen to write and finally, a red pen for writing on the margins. He used paper 6 times over!

Nothing could exemplify the can-do spirit of the hungry Indian that this remarkable man embodied. His courage, shorn of any embarrassment, and his pride in himself was remarkable. I returned home a wiser and grateful person.

My brief travels have educated me that India is changing. This change is being driven by the young. There is an unmistakable hunger and drive to excel that is propelling the hungry Indian to stretch imagination, sinew and resources in the quest to rise above his past. He is not daunted by the challenge and as we all move into a more globalized world, we must take sit-up and note.

One thing struck me strongly - the driving across the small townships. I am certain that there is a perverse inverse correlation between the width of the Indian roads and the speed of the vehicles. There is a proclivity to take ill-advised turns at high speeds with casual insouciance. Perhaps it is emblematic of the small town driver - the narrower the path to get ahead, the greater desperation of blazing a trail seen in the rearview mirror.

PS: In Patiala, there was a dilapidated bust of MK Gandhi surrounded by weeds, 3 feet high grass and a disagreeable stench all around. The garden was padlocked and there was no one around. Gandhi lived all his life in prison fighting for our freedom. He himself still is behind bars; even death could not free him from his own.

Why I Write

Urvi Kapoor, 2010 batch

I have always found writing the best way to calm down the chaos in my head. Whenever I'm not at peace with myself or my surroundings, it makes me get crazy irritated and then finally, when I blurt out the crap in my head onto a piece of paper, I feel at ease. Writing has that magic to it. There are these people, who will give you amazed looks and appreciate you just because you wrote random 8 lines of poetry. Yes these people exist. I wonder sometimes how it must be not to be able to express what you feel. Being the expressive person that I am, and living in the world that is, speaking your mind off to any person can be dangerous, and has been. Trust is the most precious thing ever, difficult to gain, more difficult to maintain and extremely easy to make it go down the drain. So I found solace in writing stuff down in my diary, which I started writing when I was in the 9th grade. YOU never are lonely if you have your diary next to you; it is this invisible soul within it that speaks to you in your hours of despair. It is this one friend who won't judge you, make fun of you, or give you suggestions every time you talk of a problem; it just listens, registers. It has always helped me in a way that sometimes, something that looked huge, when jotted down makes you realize how minuscule it actually was. Even if you miss the difference in you because of some new person in life, the diary doesn't; one look through the pages reminds you of all that has changed, both the good and the bad. It is like a secret-keeper you can trust with your life (unlike Peter Pettigrew). Good times are full of companions, many faces. It's only the bad times where all is dark that one needs courage and faith; and trust me, your diary can be your biggest support, your pillar of strength. Those funny incidences on your travel, an account of a person you met just once, those memories of a day you wouldn't want to forget, the memories of something that changed you forever - it stores it all. And somehow it also encourages a love for writing which I believe is the greatest gift god could bestow on someone. So write whenever you can, whatever you can, wherever you can. Because writing widens horizons, broadens perspective and makes life beautiful!

Updates

US Fellowships

GMCH alumni did exceedingly well in the recent fellowship match and secured fellowship spots at incredibly competitive institutions. Congratulations folks:

Anup Singh (1999 batch), Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at North Shore University, Manhasset, NY

Ankush Moza (2001 batch), Cardiology at University of Toledo, Toledo, OH

Prajeet Arora (2002 batch), Nephrology at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM

Abhimanyu Saini (2002 batch), Cardiology at Cook County Hospital, Chicago, IL

Tejpreet Singh (2002 batch), Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine at Allegheny General Hospital, Pittsburgh, PA

Indian PG

Again, a stellar performance by GMCH alumni in Indian PG entrance exams. Congratulations folks:

Gaurav Raturi (02) MD Transfusion Medicine, GMCH, Chandigarh

Dilpreet Kaur (05) MD Pathology, GMCH, Chandigarh

Kavit Gupta (05) MS Anesthesia, PGIMER, Chandigarh

Nikhil Bansal (05) MS General Surgery, Safdarjang Hospital, New Delhi

Harpreet Singh (06) MD Pediatrics, PGIMER, Chandigarh

Dinkar Bhasin (06) MD Medicine, AIIMS, New Delhi

Ankush Cugh (06) MS Orthopedics, GMC, Amritsar

Alpana Garg (06) MD Obstetrics and Gynecology, PGIMER, Chandigarh

Renu Ranga (06) MD Obstetrics and Gynecology, PGIMER, Chandigarh

Ena Arora (06) MS Ophthalmology, PGIMER, Chandigarh

Saloni Arora (06) MS Obstetrics and Gynecology, 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

Murtaza Sumbul (05) MD Radiodiagnosis, UCMS, New Delhi

Shivani Kothiyal (05) MD Obstetrics and Gynecology, KGMC, Lucknow

Whereabout Updates

Hemender Vats (1991 batch) joined as Nephrologist with Midwest Nephrology Consultants, Kansas City, MO, USA

Alkesh Khuranna (1998 batch) joined as Consultant, Critical Care, Max hospital, Mohali

Parampreet Saini (1998 batch) joined as Consultant, Critical care, Max hospital, Mohali

Lakhwinder Singh (2001 batch) joined as Senior Resident, Immunohaematology & Blood Transfusion, PGIMER Chandigarh

Mohit Dogra (2001 batch) joined as Senior Resident, Ophthalmology, GMCH, Chandigarh

Preeti Gautam (2001 batch) joined as Senior Resident, Critical Care, Fortis Hospital, Mohali

Raghav Gupta (2001 batch) joined as Senior Resident, Ophthalmology, PGIMER, Chandigarh

Saurabh Behl (2001 batch) joined as Senior Resident, Medicine, PGIMER, Chandigarh

Aashima Saini (2002 batch) was selected as Chief Resident in Medicine at Cook County Hospital, Chicago, IL, USA

Divjot Lamba (2002 batch) joined as Senior Resident, Immunohaematology & Blood Transfusion, PGIMER, Chandigarh

Gaurav Raturi (2002 batch) joined as Junior Resident (PG) in Immunohaematology & Blood Transfusion, GMCH, Chandigarh.

Himanshu Chaudhary (2002 batch) joined as Junior Resident (PG) in Obstetrics and gynecology, IGMC, Shimla

Puneet Sachdeva (2002 batch) joined as Senior Resident, Immunohaematology & Blood Transfusion, PGIMER, Chandigarh

Gaurav Mittal (2003 batch) cleared the Indian Civil Services examination and joined the Indian Revenue Services. He is currently undergoing training at Faridabad, India

Navdeep Gupta (2003 batch) joined as Senior Resident, Orthopedics, PGIMS, Rohtak

Supreet Sethi (2003 batch) was selected as Chief Resident in Medicine at the University of Arkansas, Little Rock, AK, USA

Vikas Gupta (2003 batch) joined as senior resident, medicine, PGIMS Rohtak, India

Gurkaran Singh (2004 batch) cleared the Indian Civil Services and joined the Indian Railways. He is currently undergoing training at Bhopal.

Ankush Chugh (2006 batch) joined as Junior Resident (PG) in Orthopedics, GMC, Amritsar

Weddings

Congratulations to GMCHites who got married/engaged. We wish them a long and blissful marital innings.

Amit Lakhani (2001 batch)

Mohit Dogra (2001 batch)

Raghav Gupta (2001 batch)

Shikha gupta (2001 batch) got engaged to Divay Chandra

Vikram Jassal (2001 batch) got married to Geetika.

Vivek Kochhar (2001 batch)

Navdeep Gupta (2003 batch) to Rosy Bansal

Nikita Goel (2003 batch)

Prashast Jain and Sudivya Sharma (both 2004 batch; pictured)



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