

Connections

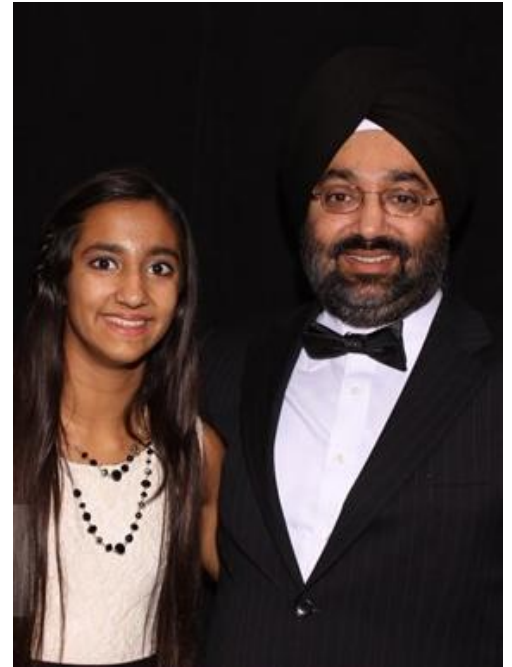
Bulletin of the Government Medical College Chandigarh Old Students Association (GMCCOSA)

Happy New Year, 2015!

Navneet Majhail, 1991 batch

Good bye 2014! Another year completed from my expected life expectancy. The grey hair on my scalp and face seems to have increased exponentially. I continue my (usually futile) attempts at reining in my abdominal girth. I am paying more attention to media reports on how to prevent pre-senile dementia. My vision is good and I hope it will be at least another decade before I need bifocals. I am thankful that I won't have to deal with menopause. Now I introspect about things a bit more, my patience has increased for some things but I am also more irritable - I suspect all are early signs of an upcoming mid-life crisis.

But 2014 was a good year. I turned 40. My frontal lobes matured a bit - I think I am beginning to understand why they say with age comes wisdom. I continue to enjoy and cherish every moment with my family. I am pleased at how our children are turning out - I am certain that all their "good" genes came from my better half. I still have their unconditional love, although I have learned that it grows stronger with an occasional dose of Nike and Aeropostale. I am still employed, and in fact have a great job that I enjoy and where I can actually make a difference in peoples lives. I remain healthy.



I am amazed that we still manage to bring out this newsletter religiously three times a year - without fail since January 2004. I cannot take any major credit for this - it happens thanks to the unwavering dedication of my co-editors, especially Divyanshoo ('03), Urvi ('10) and Siddharth ('11). I have disclosed some details of our secretive editorial process in the January 2011 issue (gmccosa.org/Connections_2011-01.pdf).

In 2016, GMCH will celebrate its silver jubilee. It is hard to believe that it has been 25 years since our first batch started its journey in this remarkable place. Rohit Jindal ('93) is working with other alumni, Prof Atul Sachdev and our college administration to organize an anniversary event - so look out for more updates from them.

Have a great 2015! And as I always say ... stay Connected!

This is the 32nd issue of Connections! Read the first ever issue of [Connections \(Jan 2004\) HERE](#)
Check out the [CONNECTIONS link on gmccosa.org](#) for archived issues

Tales for Trainees

Divyanshoo Kohli, 2003 batch

The absolute tranquility in the room was broken by the shrill clatter of the cellphone. It was close to midnight and I was awash in the soft strains of *tasveer bannata hoon* when the utterly insipid ring roused me from my reverie. As I muttered silent curses, the voice on the other end seemed to be very excited. A friend from GMCH asked breathlessly, 'Sir, I got into the intern year...*ab kya karoon?* Achha intern kaise bante hai?'

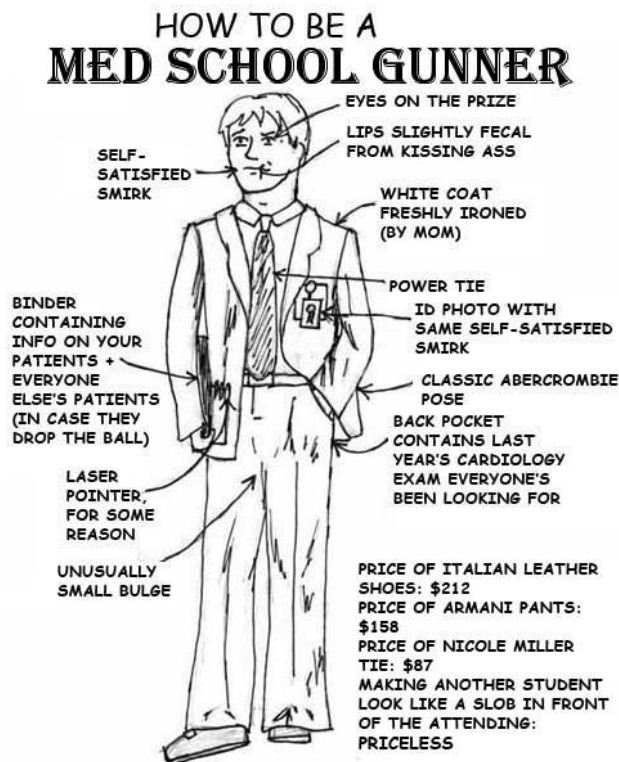
As I pondered over his seemingly innocuous query, I was admittedly left groping for a response. Indeed, how does one become a good physician? What is the definition of a good trainee? Is there really a clear-cut mantra for it? Is it in-born (like an error of metabolism) or is it learned? And finally, there came a bigger question: why ask me? Is there a qualification to pontificate on such a profound question?

My friend brought me back to Earth. 'Arre sir...*bas do-chaar cheezein bata do*. I will manage the rest' he said as he reduced my inner-most thoughts to a bunch of tricks. We discussed a few thoughts but the questions haunted me enough to put some thoughts down.

At the outset, I confess that I am ill-equipped to answer these questions. I was never a 'topper' in my entire life (not even in our very small college). The membership of the 'triple 99' club of USMLE aspirants remained elusive. I was just about able to get in and then get out of medical school without a *sifarish* and with acceptable/decent scores. Hence, I have never had an off-the-charts academic brilliance. I can however, claim to have learned from close friends in medical school, residency and now fellowship who best exemplify a model trainee and an ideal physician. I remember being coaxed by a close buddy into reading *Harrisons* early in the third year itself and being reprimanded if I missed a clinical class. I also remember a co-resident refusing to take sign-out from me after a

particularly long ICU shift until I had eaten. To my mind, these are the flashes of excellence that define a good trainee. So, this write-up is based on the qualities that I vicariously allude to.

Respect for nurses: It was at an address during a graduation ceremony where a speaker, during a rather insipid and uninspiring address, mentioned the importance of working closely with the nurses and the allied health professionals. I got a taste of that very early in my intern year when a senior nurse bailed me out of a tough situation and openly defended the interns against a particularly ill-tempered physician. As I am progressing in my education, the importance of reliable nurses has come up over and over again. Whether it is dealing with a difficult patient/family-member or missing a crucial detail while taking history, the nurses are of immense influence. One particular instance stands out in memory. I had a patient who was having unexplained fevers who we



had not been able to diagnose despite 3 days of history taking, lab tests and an exhaustive work-up. It was then that a nurse noticed a new rash on the buttocks that provided vital information and supplemented my 'complete' physical exam. The importance of a healthy relationship with the nurses cannot be over-emphasized. If you need proof, walk into an operating room and ask the rookie surgeon who commands more attention than even the senior surgeon!

Working hard: Residents in the US have a 'cap' that limits the number of new patients that can be admitted in a day. This is of course in complete contrast to the way things work in India where there is no such concept of 'limits' on the number of admissions. Towards the end of the day (i.e. night) the interns and residents were often exhausted. During my own intern year, I had started admitting a patient who was being transferred to our care from the intensive care unit but became hemodynamically unstable and hence our admission was cancelled. The patient remained in the ICU and I was ecstatic that I would be able to go home at least an hour early. It was at that moment that my senior colleague gently told me of how much I had lost. This colleague was the star of my training program and widely respected for his acumen. He asked me if I had bothered to read up on the diagnosis that the patient had and what was the latest research on the treatment? I could feel my face turning red in embarrassment. It turned out that the patient had SVC syndrome which is something I had read about in medical school but never seen in reality. My colleague told me later that I would be a physician for the rest of my life and saving a mere hour would have deprived me of a golden learning opportunity. He had, despite his immense knowledge, read a review of the subject and then proceeded to teach me about it. There was enough egg on my face that I could not meet his eye. His knowledge is not what impressed me. It was, in fact, his zeal to learn and work diligently along with his commitment towards teaching an unenthusiastic learner that impressed me. On his farewell, I told him that he had taught me more than any book ever could.

Learning and unlearning: I had a rather weird conversation with a close friend who started his training in medicine at a program in New York. He asked me if he should start reading the MKSAP books and the question bank. Over multiple phone conversations, he (hopefully) came around to the idea of learning by doing. The days of 'marked and super-marked' text in our books have gone by but the relics in our own minds continue to reek of the past. We learn today by listening to patients, examining them and coming up with a plan. The challenge in this approach is enormous and yet, delightful. In my own experience, I have had to unlearn the textbook. I was accustomed to looking for the classic textbook pattern of diseases. The real patient however, presents in the varied shades of grey which have to be analyzed individually as well as collectively. Conversely, I also had to learn from the texts - both from books but also increasingly from review articles and research articles. The learning curve was steep and of critical importance. After all, doctor as a word is derived from a Latin root meaning teacher. In an ironic twist, after over a decade of learning medicine, I came to know that I also had to learn how to read. One of the senior pulmonologists once sat down next to me and patiently explained how I had completely misinterpreted the journals and books I was



reading. As he pointed out, most of the knowledge that I was committing to my mind was based on shaky science. The edifice of my medical knowledge, has a foundation made of clay. So I unlearned the unshakeable faith in the text and also learned to read even more with a much more critical eye.

Enjoying oneself: As I put these thoughts down, I am reminded of the summer of 2011 when I started my own journey as a rookie intern in Washington DC. I spoke to my own mentor and asked for his advice. Unlike my difficulty in coming up with a coherent answer, my mentor spoke immediately and asked me to enjoy myself. That's it - not a single other syllable on the subject. His words were, as always, succinct and timely and I lived up to that motto. My co-residents and I had the best time of our lives while navigating through residency. I learned to ski between marathon 30-hour shifts in the ICU, discovered a passion for poetry, tried my hand at scuba-diving and explored cuisines from all over the world over many evenings spent strolling along the streets of DC. All this was possible due to the presence of wonderful friends who remain close even now. The ability to enjoy and decompress after work is critical for success. I felt happy at work and even after coming home. To be able to enjoy what one does and to do what one enjoys is priceless.

I am conscious of what I left out in the write-up above; specifically, doing research, being punctual, treating patients with compassion and volunteering in other activities. All these are self-evident and perhaps need no iteration.

In any case, these are some thoughts of what I think makes a good physician trainee. There are likely many facets that I have not mentioned and many more that I am yet to discover. It will take a lifetime to become a good doctor. In the interim, please keep the phone calls coming!

Postscript: There is a quote that I read some years ago stuck on a refrigerator in my friend's home: "Nothing will work unless you do". If only life were simpler...

Musings on the Return of a Fountain Pen

Sandeep Kochar (1993 batch)

Editors: Sandeep is an avid blogger, traveler, photographer, public health activist, social entrepreneur and a devoted father and husband - practicing medicine is his hobby. You can read more about his travels at his blog "Life Calling: A Blog about Life, Calling and Initiative" (sandeepkochar.blogspot.com)

At work, I had watched Rovie and Ed for years using fountain pens to write their notes while the rest of us slaved away with the regular stuff. In school I loved writing with fountain pens. I finally succumbed, buying from Amazon - where else? A well-reviewed "best-seller" relatively inexpensive Lamy pen. It arrived, neatly packaged, looking and feeling much richer than I expected, its body a mahogany-brown composite plastic.

For some reason I thought of one of Joy's personality traits: Her tendency to not embrace anything new right away, deliberating and assessing it from a distance, mind churning, two steps forward and one back, but when ready to taking the plunge, going all out. Case in point: The water sprinklers and fountains in the playgrounds in our apartment complex. In her first real biped summer, whereas other toddlers jumped fearlessly into these gushing spouts of fun, she took a whole month to make up her mind. But by the end of the summer, she was usually the last one out, and we literally had to drag her away. I guess I know now whom she takes this trait from. It's funny how we start viewing ourselves through the lens of our children.



I love the pen. It has a medium nib from which the ink flows effortlessly, my words populating and emblazoning the page with cursive flourishes and brushstrokes. To me it seems like art, but until now I have used the pen only at work. On my pages I record death and disease, prognoses and afflictions, misery and medications. The pages reek from the stench of human suffering. What beauty is there in that?

I am transported back to my boyhood, of white ironed shirts, crisp pleated gray trousers, navy blue blazers, gleaming polished black shoes, and notebooks in which we wrote with fountain pens. How we were always comparing each other's pens in a game of one-upmanship; leaky pens that smudged our hands, stained our shirts, sometimes ruined our school

bags; the groans when a brand new pen fell to the ground, its nib bucking, forever crippled; the excitement of procuring a shiny brand new pen.

The ink is lovely, soothing and a lazy shade of blue from Noodlers, named 'Baystate Blue', also sourced from Amazon. Its dreamy blue reminds me of one of my most beautiful sunsets from the stunning cliffs of the Cabo Rojo lighthouse in Puerto Rico, from where the Caribbean Sea shimmered a deep blue. What more can you ask of a humble bottle of ink?

How intensely satisfying and rich - in sometimes completely unexpected and tangential ways - it can be to resume some of the practices of our youth. This is why I feel that, as much as we are exhorted to live in the present, to carefully plan our future, we must, from time to time, dip our toes in the ink wells of our past.

GMCH will Celebrate Silver Jubilee in 2016



GMCH will soon be completing 25 years! An anniversary celebration is being planned in 2016. To facilitate the organization of this event, all alumni are requested to provide their details (name, batch, address, and email) to Rohit Jindal rohitjindalortho@yahoo.com, Vikas Bachhal vikasbachhal@gmail.com, or Rajeev Kansay drkansay@yahoo.co.in.



Dear alumnus!

New Year greetings from the organizing team of 'Euphoria 2015'! As you know our college has been organizing Euphoria for the past 17 years. The tradition is now deeply engraved as a part of annual college activities and has been growing in stature ever since its inception. It our humble request if you could contribute monetary or any other form of help in organizing 'Euphoria 2015'. This would help us in our endeavor of making 'Euphoria 2015' bigger, better and more fruitful for your Alma mater. We urge you to contribute as any and every contribution is meaningful and useful for us. We look forward to your support in helping us in making 'Euphoria 2015' a great success!

Account name: Euphoria, Acc. number: 30619067788, the State Bank of India, Govt. Medical College and Hospital sector 32, Chandigarh branch, Branch code: 010607, IFSC code: SBIN0010607

All contributions can be directly made to this account via cheque/draft via money transfer or via cash. For further details you can contact the undersigned.

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Chief coordinator - Euphoria 2015

Happenings

Rajeev Kansay began his medical journey at GMCH and then trained in Orthopedics there. He will now join as an Assistant Professor in Orthopedics at GMCH. He joins Rohit Jindal and Vikas Bachhal who trained at GMCH and are now faculty at their alma-mater. Well done folks!

Ashish Khanna (1997) received an appreciation award for his work in the Intensive Care Unit at the Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, OH, USA.

Charanjeet Singh (1999) was featured in the College of American Pathologists for his new mobile based app (cyto-Atlas) which can be used by cyto-pathologists. He is currently pursuing a pathology fellowship at MD Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, Texas, USA.

Bhalinder Dhaliwal (2003) was selected for MCh in cardiothoracic and vascular surgery at PGIMER, Chandigarh.

Reuben Kynta (2003) was selected for MCh in cardiothoracic and vascular surgery at PGIMER, Chandigarh.

Sukhtej Sahni (2003) organized an awareness campaign against substance abuse and its disorders. He is currently working as a psychiatrist in Mohali, Punjab.

Aakash Aggarwal (2004) was selected for a fellowship in Gastroenterology and Hepatology at the University of Connecticut, Farmington, CT, USA.

Jaskaran Singh (2004) will start his neonatology fellowship at GMCH Chandigarh. He is currently pursuing MD pediatrics.

Nikhil K Singh (2005) will start his training as a probationary-officer of the elite Indian Revenue Services.

Charanpreet Singh (2008) was selected for MD in Medicine at PGIMER. Chandigarh.

Weddings, Engagements & Babies

Mandeep Kumar (2000) got engaged to Colleen Marie. Mandeep is an internist at the University of Connecticut, Farmington, CT, USA.

Garima and Mohit Bansal (2000) were blessed with a son Moon.

Amandeep Sandhu (2001) was blessed with a son Gurnihaal.

Gaurav Mittal (2003) and Shruti became betrothed.

Anita Rani (2003) got married to Vishal

Vikas Gupta (2003, pictured below) got married to Navkriti.



Rajan Mittal (2003) and Anshika were blessed with a daughter Inayat.

Arihant Jain (2004) got married. He is currently pursuing DM in Hematology at PGIMER, Chandigarh.

Henna Garg (2004) and Samar Singla were blessed with a daughter, Taisha.

Saloni (2004) got married.

Sidharth Garg and Lippi Uppal (both 2004; pictured below) got married. They are both trainees at PGIMER Chandigarh, where Sidharth is pursuing MCh in CardioThoracic Surgery and Lipi is training as a pediatric cardiologist.



Shilpi Jain (2004) got married. She is pursuing MD in Medicine in New York.

Dilpreet Randhawa (2005) was engaged to Charanpreet Grewal.

Sonal and Nikhil Garg (both 2006 batch, pictured below) got married.



Reunions

Mini-reunion 2003 batch: Rashi, Kamlesh, Aarti and Kusum at the wedding of Anita



Mini-reunion, 2004 batch: Sudhanshu, Deepander, Kanchi, Nipun, Arihant, Lipi and Sidharth



Mini-reunion, Texas: Manpreet, Megha , Sahil (all 2002) and Geetinder Goyal (1997)



In Memoriam

Editors: The loss of a loved one is devastating. Sometimes, we get this information directly. More often, we get to know of this unfortunate news indirectly (e.g., from friends and social media). We share the information below without any permissions. We do this so that our friends are not alone during this extremely difficult time – so that they know there is a whole community thinking of and praying with them.

Our deepest condolences to Guneet (2000) and Bikram Saini on the loss of their son Aaron Saini who passed away in October. We share the immense grief of the Saini family and pray for the departed soul.

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