Connections

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

Beyond the USMLE

Divyanshoo R Kohli, 2003 batch

There is a state of mass-hysteria that pervades us. It is referred to as herd mentality or mob mentality and it afflicts the student community of GMCH. It is omnipresent, recalcitrant and contagious. I too am a victim of it. Herd mentality describes how people are influenced by their peers to adopt certain practices and take decisions based on what the herd decides. I firmly believe that the decision to pursue post-graduation studies is driven purely by herd mentality rather than a well thought out plan. Nothing could be more unfortunate.



There has been disquiet at the alumni association based on the feedback we got from you all. A lot of the alumni rued the fact that the students and the recent graduates have been pursuing the MLE or the Indian PG without giving the alternatives any great thought. A part of the blame must be shared by the GMCCOSA. Our well intentioned and in-depth analysis of the USMLE has fed into the craze for the MLE and possibly perpetuated the mob rule.

Our effort is to discuss somewhat 'off-beat' career options and to explore them. We are fortunate that our alumni have done extremely well not only in the field of medical science but also in unconventional fields such as civil services, the Indian Army, basic science research, business management and others. Too often the graduates of our medical school decide about their professional lives before giving any careful thought to the alternatives. Perhaps it is not our timidity but sheer ignorance which drives us into the mob with our arms flailing and blinkers on the ready! This issue of Connections is to try and correct that.

We have some stalwarts in different professions who will be sharing their views through Connections. In this edition, we have Dr. Gaurav Mittal (2003 batch) and Dr. Khyati Garg (2005 batch) who will share their thoughts on civil services as a career option. Gaurav is an officer in the Indian Revenue Services (Customs and Excise) while Khyati will serve the Indian Police Services. They both have carried forward the legacy of Drs. Nipun Vinayak, Basant Garg, Gagandeep Singla, Gurkaran Singh and others who have done GMCH proud by cracking the prestigious Civil Services

This is the 28th issue of Connections! Read the first ever issue of <u>Connections (Jan 2004) HERE</u> Check out the <u>CONNECTIONS link on gmccosa.org</u> for archived issues examination. On a personal note, I have had the privilege of being a close friend of Gaurav and seeing him through the travails of this extremely brutal and yet exhilarating examination process. Our intention is that after reading their stories, the current students will think more broadly about their options and hopefully, will be inspired to serve the country beyond the 4 walls of the hospital ward.

We intend to continue this trend and hope that other alumni too will be sharing their stories and experiences. We invite alumni to contribute articles for this endeavor. In the subsequent issues, we hope to touch on careers like basic science research, serving as a physician in the Indian Army, being a physician in India, etc. This is probably the best way for the alumni to give back to the alma mater and help the 'younger' generation (Admit it; we now qualify as geriatric!).

Postscript: A quick note about the history behind this effort: I remember a graduate from the 98 batch who was doing Pulmonology at GMCH. He was someone with an enviable reputation and whose word inspired deeply respect. He told me that the one thing GMCCOSA has to do to move forward is to 'look beyond the USMLE so that the word percolates down the batches as well'. Well, here is to making amends and acknowledging the input from a wonderful friend, beloved senior and thorough gentleman - Dr Alkesh Khurana!

Happy reading folks!

Happy 22nd Birthday GMCH!!

Editors: Annual Day photograph courtesy Prof VK Kak's Facebook page

We have come a long way since September 9th, 1991. Many quintessential and recognizable faces, including Prof's Sachdev, Kapoor, Mohan, Swami, Kak, Chopra and Bahadur.



GMCH Chronicles - GMC The First Day

Hemender Singh, 1991 batch

(Editors: This article, from the very first issue of Connections, is being reprinted here to celebrate GMCH's anniversary. <u>CLICK HERE</u> to access the complete January 2004 issue)

h 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 'Govt 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 then 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 the time - but now in retrospect reflects on 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.

Civil Services As A Career Option

Khyati Garg (IPS), 2005 batch

Ello everyone, I would first like to congratulate you all on your success being a part of our medical fraternity. For some it was a childhood dream, for others an infatuation of early adolescence, for most others, a parental logic of "if you score better in biology you take medical; if mathematics, you pursue non-medical, if neither, then commerce and arts"- although the flowchart might be different for us all. After having achieved this milestone, we continue to grow and realize our potential and strengths. The sense of accomplishment and self-esteem this gives us is surely unparalleled. A doctor's place is considered next to God in the Indian society. The comfort, access to public dealing, the great responsibility entrusted on our shoulders, the social status, security of work and decent income make this profession a heavenly abode.

As we head towards the next step however, we get many future career options, most popular being Indian post-graduation or USMLE or MBA. For those who don't stop at medical horizons and want to explore beyond there is also a possibility of civil services. Amidst many myths, rumors and societal stories, this remains a less explored field for medical professionals. It is this lack of knowledge and perceived fears that make this exam and its results so uncertain that people tend to refrain from taking it up. However, clear information, planned strategy, focused hard work and determination are all that are needed.

Civil services examinations are held by Union Public Services Commission (UPSC) for recruitment of all-India and central services of both group A and B officers. Any graduate can appear for this exam and is allowed a maximum of four attempts for general category and relaxations for others (one can access the official link of UPSC for specific eligibility criteria, age criteria and relaxations, exam pattern, subjects and previous years' papers). A multiple choice preliminary exam, held in August 2014 next, includes general studies and Civil services Aptitude Test (CSAT) with a combined cut off. It is just a screening exam. For the subjective mains held in November end or December; the current pattern since 2013 includes an optional subject which can be from our graduation. For



physicians like us, this would mean medical sciences as a whole or any other subject from the list they have provided. Besides this, there are four papers of general studies. A myth that general studies as a subject is equivalent to general knowledge needs to be broken. Here the content mentioned is specific, concise and needed to know at "general" level only. Also, the all-round knowledge of current affairs is equally essential for which a regular newspaper every day should suffice. There is no need as such to attend coaching classes. If however one feels that one needs some hand holding then coaching is available for general studies and optional subjects. The final total marks cut-off decides the next round of personality test or interview. It is not purely knowledge based, it aims assessment of a person's behavior, attributes, balanced approach, rational and logical decision making, confidence and presence of mind.

Having said that, I would say that although the preparation requires complete digression from medicine, the profession of a civil servant is very noble and inspiring. As it is said, with great power comes greater responsibility, there is much more beyond the perceived social status, elitist lifestyle and power that are attached to this profession. The broad platform and challenges that it provides are unparalleled. The salaries, although lesser than medical field, are sufficiently enhanced after the sixth pay commission. The uniqueness lies in a vast public contact (especially for All-India services like IAS and IPS) which gives us huge exposure and broadens our horizons of growth. Also, it gives a chance to act at a stage where one can prevent many social and physical ailments rather than dealing with their cure.

Here I would like to share my experiences during internship which made my commitment towards this profession even stronger. The feeling of helplessness I felt when a pregnant lady suffered social and familial inhibitions on gender and family planning issues, or when the relatives of an old lady refused to pay for her cancer therapy or when poverty and loss of wages and lack of adequate infrastructure caused resentment among all stakeholders from staff to patients to doctors, I felt there had to be a better position for me to work upon these core problems, rather than treating ailments symptomatically. This however, does not undermine the work culture and opportunities that the medical profession provides.

Whatever be your reason for choosing the kind of work you decide for your life, remember, there are opportunities everywhere. There are challenges and need for hard work in all fields. Also there is no end to learning. It is for the person to decide what position and nature of work are most appealing to him/her. We can achieve everything with the right attitude and guidance. It is difficult to write about all possible queries, myths and examination details here. However, anyone who needs help regarding a career option in civil services can contact me. I wish you all the very best of luck in your pursuits.

Civil Services As A Career Option

Gaurav Mittal, 2003 batch

ivil services have always been one of the most prestigious services of India as has been the profession of the physician. Medicine as a field and doctors as people still command respect among the masses. So the question comes why pursue civil services after doing M.B.B.S? Is it not a waste of national resources for a country which has one of the lowest doctor-patient ratios in the world? Is it not a waste at the personal level as one has to toil hard 2 years to clear the PMT entrance and then again study hard for 5 ½ years to get a degree, while the civil services examination can be taken even after simple graduation of three years? The skills and specialized knowledge that the person had gained would seem to be wasted.

In this article, I would like to clear some of these perceptions and highlight the utility of the civil services both at a personal level and at a national level. Undoubtedly, the best thing about the Civil services is the complete diversity of service, something which no other profession offers. One may be involved in policy-making one day working in the various ministries, and may be working in policy enforcement the next day. One may get a chance to be involved with intelligence operations and

may go to serve in various international organizations. So the diversity of work is immense and is almost unparalleled and unmatched.

Next comes the scope of work. We all know that India is a fast emerging economy and the pace despite some recent shocks has been almost unmatched as compared to the past. With increasing assertiveness of the people and the civil society and more rights-based legislation, the scope of work has expanded enormously. Whether it is NREGA or the Right to food the scope of work has expanded manifold. So, the diversity and scope of work is such that would attract talent from all professions including physicians.

One very important aspect is a great lateral mobility that thrives within the civil services. For example, in the medical field, the life of a doctor is set in stone once the rank of the PG exam is declared. Based on our rank, we are required to adhere to a particular specialization whether we like it or not. In civil services, however, the horizontal mobility is much more. So you may have an information-services person heading the finance ministry which allows one to change his work according to his preferences and tastes. People from diverse fields enter the service which allows one to learn about a particular issue from different perspectives.

Though the doctors are deficient in the country, particularly in rural areas, it can be pointed out that the Civil servant can positively impact the determinants of health, poverty, gender imbalance and sanitation. There can be greater impact on systems improvement particularly at rural level. I would digress a bit here and state that governments should not resort to compulsory rural posting. After all, compulsion and democracy are completely opposite. I personally believe that doctors will be willing to serve in rural areas if there is a concerted effort at policy improvement which may be best served by having doctors as health policy makers.

Now, let me dwell on how to prepare for the exams. I myself cleared the exam on my third attempt and may not be the best person to wax eloquent about this, but the basic points are:

- 1) Reading a newspaper daily is a must. My preference was for the Hindu though he Indian Express and Economic Times are good substitutes. Newspaper reading is the most important part of the whole preparation and maximum emphasis must be given to reading editorials. It must be supplemented by watching current affairs discussions on Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha TV.
- 2) Read the standard NCERT textbooks and other reputed publishers to have clarity of the basic concepts.
- 3) Choosing the optional subject is the trickiest part and one should choose it only on the basis of pure interest and no other consideration. Never go in for past year results or the concept of scoring or non-scoring subject.
- 4) Preparation for the interview is critically important and was probably my weakest link. Having been bitten twice, I can say it must never be ignored.

In the end, I would also like to clear one gross misconception. Many people are attracted to Civil services by the lure of big government houses, cars with red beacon lights, and the sundry paraphernalia which are euphemistically called 'perks of the job'. These are all receding very fast and in fact do no good for the nation. So, if you decide to join the civil services do it only for the love of your job.

My best wishes to the current students and the future servants of the country.

Updates From GMCH: The New And The Old

Urvi Kapoor, 2010 batch

hey say, 'every new leader brings about a new perspective to the thinking of his pack of followers.'

With the new Director-Principal Dr. Atul Sachdev, GMCH has seen a few welcome changes. The first and the most important to us is that now the new batch size has increased. Each batch will now have 100 students instead of the 50 previously. Obviously more students will make the college a bigger platform, but still there are so many lingering questions. Is it even possible to manage 100 students? With 100 students and 4 cadavers in the anatomy lab, what exactly will 25 students learn on a single body? Will everyone even get a chance to hold the scalpel? And what about the labs and practical classes? How will hundred students ever fit in any of the labs that are meant to hold half the number of students?



The speculations being made vary and include some wild ones – examples include, there will be two batches within

the batch, one that will attend anatomy in the morning and the other will study physiology and biochemistry. By far the best one I heard so far was that two batches of 50 students will be made and they will have classes alternate days of the week. That would again be a very welcome change. Due to all the court cases and politics, the last 50 haven't joined yet. So what it exactly will be like, will be known once they are here. Poor guys – they have already missed Plexus. Let's see how they deal with the vagaries of the 1st Proff.

I love that feeling when these new birds, with new wings attached, come flying into college and are all chirpy and squeaky. Then, two months later every single one of them is found sitting on the hostel stairs looks mournful and asks philosophical questions like 'Ma'am, kyun liya medical??' 'Kyun ki MBBS?'

New faculty has joined as well and the department of Medicine has expanded. Dr Ram Singh is now heading the department. Dr. Yashdeep, an endocrinologist, has joined the faculty and has become immensely popular among the students. He has taught us about a few endocrinological disorders and always interacts with students with a smile. There are plans to start a cardiology catheterization lab and a cardiologist, Dr. Mukesh has joined the faculty as well.

This is all that's new, the old is still as it is. Final Proff students going crazy as there is one month left for their send ups. Pre-final students seem lost and dazed, as the whole year just went by and the books remain unread while the exams are coming closer. 2nd Proff students are done with organizing Plexus and are about to face the horror called 2nd Proff exams. On the other hand, the new 2nd Proff students, fresh from the conquests of the First year are all bundled up and waiting to go to Pulse. And then there are the new kids on the block who are still delighted and excited with their new feathers. Let's see how long they fly high? Signing off ...

M.B.B.S Safari Charanpreet Singh, 2008 batch

adies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls, We welcome you to the journey of a lifetime where you will witness the young "1st Proffer", The ever wise "Old Final Student" and the Oh So Majestic "Intern" (I pray forgiveness for being so self indulgent). So keep your hands and legs inside the vehicle at all times, and please do not feed the animals.

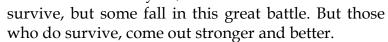
We begin where it all begins, with the First Prof Student. Look at the vivacious young things, at the top of the world, having cleared their exams and gotten into a medical college. Little do they know that this happiness is short lived- That they are the bottom of the food chain, and prey for so many predators (read: Professors and Seniors).

As we move further along the line, we see the Fresh 2nd year students. With all the time and freedom in the world, they try to expand their territories and explore new regions (Pulse anyone?) The male tries to attract the female with varied mating rituals, and many couples break off from the herd to enjoy the "Honeymoon Period" of MBBS.

But as time progresses, they realize their new position in the food chain - the Hunted are now the Hunters. They utilize their new found power and aspire to show it off by hosting a feast for the entire forest (a.k.a Plexus). But like all high ambitioned creatures, they must face their dreaded enemy (you know: Exams) to progress along their journey.

To your left you will see the Third Years, a clan known most for their laziness - an attribute they develop due to their new environment, which offers plenty of food and virtually no other predators (Third Prof Exams).

Now ladies and gentlemen, we enter the darkest sphere of the forest. Here lies the most dangerous clan of them all - one renowned for its ability to spend endless hours in the library and possessing just enough knowledge to think of themselves as Kings and Queens - The Final Years. Having let go of all their wants and desires in February (see: Euphoria), they dive into their books in preparation for the final frontier. This clan is hardly ever seen out of their natural habitat (Library and Clinics) and has a propensity to become nocturnal. Come the end of the year, it is time for the war. Most



And finally, we see the last clan of creatures, "the Interns". They reach the pinnacle of college, only to realize that they are now at the bottom of a completely different food chain with Jr's, Sr's and Faculty now towering above them. They are the ones who will explain to you the meaning of the phrase "Shit travels downhill".

With that ladies and gentlemen, we come to the end of this safari. We hope you have enjoyed this trip and any appreciation you may want to show the guide is most welcome.



Kudos: Navneet Singh ('92 Batch)

Navneet Singh was awarded the Palliative Care Fellowship by the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) for 2012-13 and in this connection, visited the Kantonsspital, St Gallen, Switzerland this year. Currently working as Assistant Professor of Pulmonary Medicine at PGIMER, Chandigarh, he has been a past recipient of the International Development and Education Award of the American Society of Clinical Oncology and the American Association of Cancer Research-National Cancer Institute (AACR-NCI) International Investigator Opportunity Grant. He is also the current Secretary of the Indian Society for Study of Lung Cancer (ISSLC), and is the Course Coordinator for an international conference on lung cancer that will be held in Chandigarh in April, 2014 (see conference invite below).

First Multidisciplinary Lung Cancer Management Course (Jointly organized by ASCO, ISSLC, PGIMER and TMC)

Venue: **PGIMER, Chandigarh** Dates: **April 05-06, 2014**









Course Chairperson
Dr. Lawrence H. Einhorn

Distinguished Professor of Medicine, Division of Hematology/Oncology, Indiana University School of Medicine, Indianapolis, USA Dr. D. Behera

President ISSLC

Senior Professor, Department of Pulmonary Medicine, PGIMER, Chandigarh Course Coordinator
Dr. Navneet Singh

Assistant Professor, Department of Pulmonary Medicine, PGIMER, Chandigarh Course Coordinator
Dr. CS Pramesh

Professor of Surgical Oncology & Chief, Thoracic Surgery, Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai

Contact Information:

<u>navneetchd@hotmail.com</u> +91-172-275-6826; +91-991-420-9826 cspramesh@gmail.com

Further information about the course (including agenda, faculty, registration) and brochure will be available at www.isslc.org and www.isslc.org and www.asco.org/meetings/calendar-events by September end/early October 2013

Residency Updates

2005 batch

Jivtesh Singh, MS General Surgery, PGIMER, Chandigarh

Tribhav Goel, MD Anesthesia, GMCH 32 Chandigarh

Piyush Sharma, MS ENT, GMCH 32 Chandigarh

2006 batch

Sonal Srivastva, MD Obstetrics and Gynecology, AIIMS, Delhi

Abhinav Aggarwal, MS General Surgery, PGIMER Chandigarh

Aman Batish, MS General Surgery, Maulana Azad Medical College, New Delhi Anuj Soni, MD Anesthesia, GMCH 32 Chandigarh

Harpreet Singh, MD Nuclear Medicine, PGIMER Chandigarh

Harshwant Grover, MD Pulmonary Medicine, GMCH 32 Chandigarh

Jasmine Lamba, MD Pathology, GMCH 32 Chandigarh

Karan Singla, MD Anesthesia, PGIMER Chandigarh

Kashish Dutta, MD Pathology, GMCH 32 Chandigarh

Lakshya Prateek Rathore, MS Orthopedics, IGMC, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

Love Kapoor, MS Orthopedics, GMCH 32 Chandigarh

Manav Goyal, MS General Surgery, GMCH 32 Chandigarh

Meesha Verma, MD Obstetrics and Gynecology, GMCH 32 Chandigarh

Piyush Kohli, MS Opthalmology, GMCH 32 Chandigarh

Vishal Thakur, MS General Surgery, Tanda Medical College, Himachal Pradesh

2007 batch

Parul Goyal, MS Opthalmology, PGIMER Chandigarh

Harsimran Tiwana, MS ENT, PGIMER Chandigarh

Reunions

Reunion of 2000 batch: (Left to right) Rajan Goyal, Manish Garg, Shashank, Roopsi Bassi, Sidharth Aggarwal, Garima and Mohit Bansal and Munish Aggarwal at sector 17, Chandigarh.



Whereabout Updates

Navneet Majhail (1991 batch) joined as Director of Bone Marrow Transplant Program at Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Rupali Tyagi (1991 batch) is working as Senior Lecturer in Ophthalmology, Shri Guru Ram Rai Medical College, Dehradun

Devant Goswami (1997 batch) is working as Cardiac Anesthesiologist at Max Hospital, Mohali

Alkesh Khurana (1998 Batch) was appointed as an Assistant Professor at AIIMS, New Delhi

Amit Kansal (1999 batch) was appointed as an Assistant Professor in Immunology and Rheumatology at DMCH, Ludhiana

Sahil Chopra (2002 batch) was appointed as a hospitalist at Loma Linda University, CA, USA

Vikas Gupta (2003 batch) joined DM Cardiology at DMCH, Ludhiana

Bhawna Gupta (2003 batch) joined GMCH 32 as a Senior Resident in Anesthesia

Navdeep Gupta (2003 batch) joined GMCH 32 as a Senior Resident in Orthopedics

Happenings

Lakhwinder Singh (2001 batch) got engaged

Sachin Gupta (2001 batch) was blessed with a son Kayaan. Sachin is a hospitalist at the Reading Hospital Center, PA

Saurabh Behl (2001 Batch) got engaged

Divjot Lamba (2002 batch) got married to Harmala Kaur

Manik Garg (2002 batch) get betrothed

Sandeep Sarpal (2002 batch) and Tarundeep were blessed with a baby boy

Manisha Kataria (2003 Batch) got engaged.

Aman Gupta (2003 batch) got engaged; He is currently pursuing his MD in Pediatrics at PGIMER, Chandigarh

Rashi Sarna (2003 batch) and Nitin Bither were blessed with a daughter

Sachin Garg (2003 batch) got engaged

Sonal Gupta (2003 batch) got engaged to Anand Aggarwal

Shruti Akku (2003 batch) married Anant Singh

Arihant Jain (2004 batch) got betrothed

Jagandeep Singh Virk (2004 Batch) was engaged to Jaslovleen Sindhu; Jagan is pursuing orthopedics at GMCH 32

Parminder kaur (2004 batch) got engaged to Saurabh Kapoor

Jivtesh Singh (2005 batch) got engaged to Kavnit; Jivtesh is pursuing surgery at PGIMER

Jyoti Deswal (2006 batch) got married to Navneet Redhu

Rosanna Kaur Jhawar (2007 batch) got married to Raj Singh Sangha

EDITORS: Navneet Majhail (91 batch), Cleveland, USA; Hemender Vats (91 batch), Kansas City, USA; Sandeep Kochar (93 batch), Brooklyn, USA; Charanjeet Singh (99 batch), Houston, USA; Divyanshoo Rai Kohli (2003 batch), Washington DC, USA; Anuj Sharma (2007 batch), Chandigarh; Urvi Kapoor (2010 batch), Chandigarh; Siddharth Sood Duggal (2011 batch), Chandigarh