

Connections

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

On Quacks and Quackery

Navneet Majhail, 1991 batch

I recently came across two articles on accountability and quality of care provided by physicians in India. The titles are self-explanatory (click on links to read): [Medicine in India: Rampant quackery, baffling drug landscape](#) and [Medicine in India: Rough road to physician accountability](#). My first instinct was to be defensive – the allegations were not true, the analysis was flawed and there is no way this quackery could be happening in India. The article talks about physicians and non-physicians together as one group – which is unfair as we are better trained and more knowledgeable about the human body's mechanisms and disease.

But then I took a step back, began introspecting on my own experience. Whenever I visit India, it is routine for one or two family friends or acquaintances to request an informal second opinion for a loved one undergoing cancer treatment. I have seen instances of chemotherapy doses administered that are way below what is recommended, once a day medicines being given three times a day, CT scans after each cycle of chemotherapy, a bone marrow transplant when one was definitely not indicated, radiation therapy administered to treat cancers where there is no evidence to support its use, strong antibiotics given for mild viral infections – and the list goes on and on.

We have excellent and conscientious physicians at reputable places such as GMCH and PGI. However, the 'common man', with limited resources, money and *jugaad*, is usually not able to avail the expertise available at these institutions and ends up being at the mercy of quacks – individuals who are not physicians and may not be trained in medicine at all. Some physicians are no better, and practice suboptimal medicine. One can debate about the overhaul needed within the Indian healthcare system. However, an important aspect of this change has to be accountability and the quality of care we provide to our patients.

I encourage you to read both articles. Introspect, and think about how you can be the change. How you can be true to the Hippocratic Oath while embracing the tenets of modern evidence based medicine.

And as always ... stay Connected!!

This is the 34th issue of Connections! Read the first ever issue of [Connections \(Jan 2004\) HERE](#)

Check out the [CONNECTIONS link on gmccosa.org](#) for archived issues

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The Art Of Writing Letters The Old-Fashioned Way

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)

Do you remember what that feels like? And if you were someone born after the year 2000, you may perhaps never even have written a letter on paper.

During my childhood, I had several pen friends in various countries around the world. Writing to them and receiving letters from them was an indescribable joy. This was before the era of the internet, and I felt my pen friends were my window to the world while I was comfortably ensconced in my little provincial corner in India.

In the last few years, I have attempted to resume that practice with a few friends. It's been a stuttering and sputtering endeavor, with mixed success. When it works, it's even more enthralling in this day and age, but I had no idea how much inertia comes with lack of practice and habits. Okay, so you want to write a letter the old-fashioned way? Let's start. Consider this a tutorial, commentary, philosophy, potential pitfalls and warnings, all bundled together.

So you want to write a letter on paper? That is in fact the easiest part, once you can overcome the layers and layers of languor and procrastination that have enveloped your system - like a thick, impenetrable hide - in this era of instant access. You will be taken aback by how much effort is required to commit yourself to write for just fifteen to twenty minutes, uninterrupted and with concentration. You may harbor fantasies of getting some fancy stationary and a nice pen. Forget it, it's not happening. If you really do mean to write your letter, find any scrap of paper - newspaper, toilet paper, stuff meant for the garbage - and put any leaky pen you find to work.

Okay, letter done, somehow you have managed to put heart and soul into words, lovingly inked on a couple of sheets of paper. What now? Here is where the real problem starts.

Envelopes? Ha! Stamps? Hoo!

Regarding the former, thankfully stores have not come to the conclusion that they no longer need to store these relics from the pre-internet era...yet. And stamps? You will furiously rummage through your drawers, hoping that somehow, somewhere, one old, faded Forever stamp will reveal itself. It's a futile effort.

It's now time to trudge to those magnificent, bureaucratic, dysfunctional institutions of the modern era - the post office. The architecture is glorious, paints peeling, furniture rickety, air stale, and the personnel are, well, a combination of all of that. Yet, to be actually able to conduct a transaction with a person, engage in a face-to-face conversation, is somehow a relief and catharsis, a welcome distraction from staring at a cold screen. It's worth it: I may get a peptic ulcer every now and then, yet I somehow manage to enjoy and cherish my occasional forays in the post office.

You are pretty chuffed up by now. You have a written letter, procured stamps and envelopes. Almost home right? Listen. Sssshhh. What do you hear? That is the writer's incredulous, evil laugh!

You still have to fold the letter, place it in the envelope, use tongue to properly seal envelope, affix stamp onto envelope, write your and recipients address correctly. Then comes one of the steps

with the greatest resistance. The letter has to be dropped into a mailbox. Chances are, the poor letter will languish for days on your desk or the table, gathering dust, buried deeper and deeper under a pile of newspapers, magazines and junk mail.

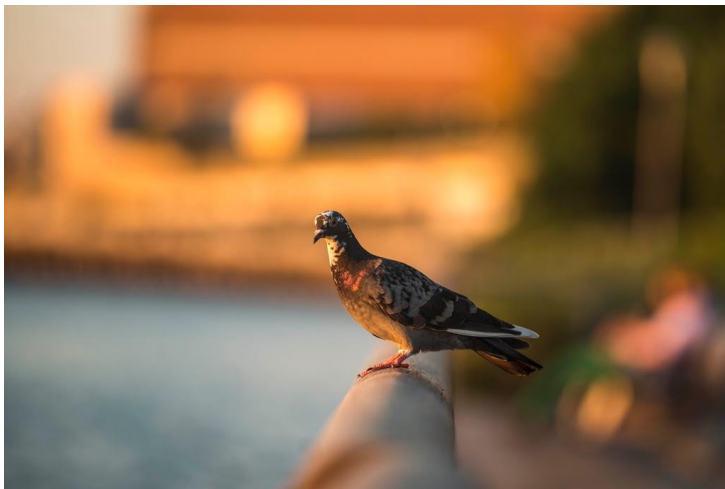
One fine day, however, you will finally release it into the maws of a mailbox, into the darkness and void of the space beyond, heaving a sigh of relief. Even now, I am gripped with an irrational thought that something, someone, at the other hand will grab or bite my hand, that I may come up with a finger or two short. Some of the fantasies of your childhood will never cease to abandon you.

And now you are done. You did it! If the recipient is as conscientious as you, he or she will respond too, in a reasonable amount of time, and when you get a letter you will be ecstatic. It's a pleasure like no other.

The whole effort will have been completely worth it. So get down to it and write your letter. The old-fashioned way.

New York City On My Mind

Sandeep Kochar, 1993 batch



I wanted to show some pictures of New York City through the eyes of a local. Sure, there are the tourist icons, but far from the madding crowds the city has its own charms and secrets. Waking up before dawn to catch a sunrise on the East River is one of them. I often feel I am on the set of the Will Smith movie, "I am Legend" - you have the city to yourself. Well, almost. To the right of the pigeon, blurred out, is a pair of lovers. It's a local tradition, to end a wild night out on the town this way - put up your feet and catch a meditative sunrise.

Go to China Town early in the morning and join the hum and industry of a community waking up. The smell of fish and aroma of fresh pork buns, intermingled with incense from Buddhist temples permeates the air. Fishmongers arranging their catch, meat being cleaved, trucks delivering, elderly men playing Mahjong in the parks, large groups of men and women exercising in parks to Chinese music, shops being readied for commerce - it's a fascinating start to the day.





My favorite neighborhood in New York is Alphabet City in the East Village. Bereft of tourist hordes, skyscrapers, and brand stores, it has a unique sensibility. It has enough rough edges and low rents to attract an eclectic crowd - artists, singers, bohemians, hipsters, students, new expats, and people with more dubious intents. Street art, murals, graffiti, historic buildings, mom-and-pop restaurants and independent quirky stores, bodegas - there is enough to keep you preoccupied. I go here when I want to be among locals.

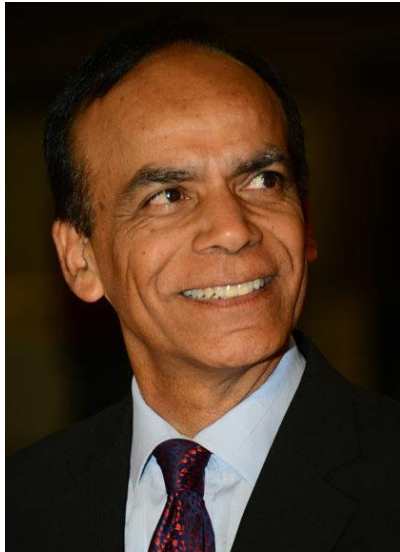
One of my greatest guilty pleasures - as it should be for anyone - in New York City is people watching. Find a comfortable spot, park yourself, and watch the great circus of life go by. My favorite recommendations are Washington Square Park in the West Village, Union Square, and the plaza opposite the Flatiron Building in Gramercy.



New York City embraces the inner you - in every form, shape, color, eccentricity, gender, religious and sexual orientation and says, "Roll with it. Be yourself!"

Dr Harsh Mohan Retires From GMCH

Divyanshoo Kohli, 2003 batch



Dr. Harsh Mohan retired from GMCH after a long and fruitful innings where he established and nurtured the department of Pathology. He served the department as well as the subject of pathology with utmost dedication and distinction. The immense popularity of his textbook of pathology ensured that GMCH was recognized nationally as well as internationally as a center of expertise. He also served as the Editor-in-chief of the Indian Journal of Pathology and Microbiology.

Over the decades he spent in GMCH, he mentored scores of MBBS and MD students and kept us all inspired as well as grounded. He served GMCH in the capacity of the Medical Superintendent till recently. The older students often recall the times when he was the faculty editor of our college magazine and guided students in the tense minutes before the issue was to be released and the copies of the magazine were frantically transported from the printing press to the Sarai auditorium.

The alumni join the faculty, students and staff members of the GMCH family in wishing a fond farewell to Dr. Mohan and pray for a healthy and joyous retired life.

Read his interview with Connections here: http://www.gmccosa.org/GMCchronicles_019.htm

Happenings

Charanjeet Singh (1999) was awarded the Jesse Jones cancer education award for his exceptional work and research. He also started working as a consultant in pathology in Orlando, Florida.

Saurabh Uppal (2002) joined as a pediatric endocrinologist in Jalandhar, Punjab.

Anurag Rana (2008) joined as a junior resident, Orthopedics at PGIMER, Chandigarh.

Ajay Singh (2004) was presented the Harold Gunson Fellowship at the International Society of Blood Transfusion Congress.

Weddings, Engagements & Babies

Sandeep (1993) and Preeti (1994) Kochar welcomed a baby daughter, Jiya, on September 4th (pictured on right)

Mili and Manish Thakur (both 1998) were blessed with a daughter Sonya

Esha and Rahul Kataria (2001) were blessed with a baby, Amayra

Vidushi (2001) and Krishan (2003) became parents

Puneet Sachdev (2002) became a father



Kusum Lata (2003) got married to Vishal

Ajay Singh (2004) got married

Nipun Verma (2004) got engaged to Shreya (*pictured with his batch-mates*)

Deepak Vashisht (2004) got married

Preet Mangat (2004) got engaged

Rashmi (2006) got married to Rohit Raman

Anuj Soni (2007) got engaged to Shruti



Reunions



Mini-reunion, 1996 batch: Ashwani Kapoor, Harmeet Singh, Rajeev Kansay, Nishant Sachdev and Mukesh Aggarwal

Mini-reunion, 1999 batch: Vikas Bachhal, Kanwaljit Singh, Charanjeet Singh, Amit Gupta, Rajeev Garg and Shilpa Goyal



Mini-reunion, 2005 batch: Vishal Jindal, Nikhil Bansal, Rashmi Singh, Nitin Chopra, Murtaza Sumbul, Rahul Katyal, Prannay Gulati and Mohit Bhutani



Mini-reunion, 2007 batch: Anubhav Malhotra, Kartikeya Kashyap, Dixit Chauhan and Aayush Singhal

Mini-reunion, Cleveland, Ohio, USA: Niyati Mahajan (2000), Surbhi Saini (2001), Ashish Saini (1997) and Ashish Khanna (1998)



Postcard From Cairo

Navneet Majhail, 1991 batch

One perk of academic medicine is that one gets to travel, and I was recently invited to Egypt. I am sharing some sights of Cairo, which is a hotter, dustier, and a bit more chaotic version of New Delhi. Visit to the Tahir Square was surreal – there were no remnants of the revolution from a few years ago – it is life as usual now.

