

## Behind the bench

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### Abstract

This is an article based on a student's perspective, as to how he/she feels behind the bench. What was the first thing that came to your mind when you read the title 'Behind the Bench'? I want you to hold your thought there and close your eyes for a minute and imagine yourself back in your student-hood Behind Your Bench.

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So many of us here subconsciously read articles with catchy titles first. And now that you have made up your mind that you want to go ahead and read this one I would like to ask you a question before I begin. What was the first thing that came to your mind when you read the title 'Behind the Bench'? I want you to hold your thought there and close your eyes for a minute and imagine yourself back in your student-hood Behind Your Bench.

Yes, this is an article based on a student's perspective, as to how he/she feels behind the bench. To begin with, I would like to narrate to you how I came to write this. It was for the first time I had accompanied my mother who is a physiotherapist to one of her seminars just to see how she presents herself on stage, how she teaches, how she interacts, etc. It was a full fledged 2 day long programme at the end of which she was extremely tired. Another accompanying senior physiotherapist and she were telling me about the hardships they face as teachers in their college. They take lectures, teach, attend patients and sometimes are so busy that they have no time even for lunch or tea and amidst all this disappoints or rather upsets them the most is when students misbehave. And while I use the word misbehave I am talking about the times when we make noise in the class, don't pay attention or bunk lectures which are prepared with a lot of efforts by the teachers only for the betterment of the students themselves.

I thought of all of this for a minute and then nodded my head in approval because I had seen the efforts she had taken day and night in making presentations and preparing for lectures. But then I thought what about those students who

are attending the seminar from 8am to 5pm? Or What about how all us feel while attending college from 8am to 5pm. Well we have a completely different outlook towards it.

I have heard and read that the maximum span of concentration of an average human is approximately 45-50 minutes, after which one should take a break for 10 minutes and then start again for better understanding and recall. Being a medical student I start my college day with postings where we are taught clinical subjects at the hospital. A subsequent hour's break for lunch is followed by a series of lectures and practical until evening. Just like our teachers we are running around too, there are times when we get late in postings or have preponed lectures due to which many a times we skip lunch too. Once a teacher is done with his lecture he can go back and relax in the staffroom, but for us, we just have to sit for next one. Sitting there behind the bench and listening to lectures one after the other till the days schedule comes to an end. There are times when I listen to microbiology followed by pathology followed by pharmacology for an hour each without the much needed 10 minute break and at the end my understanding and recall give up. Our teachers have the podium for themselves, are free to move around or sit, free to use their chalk or pointer. But for us, after sitting for hours together in the same position not only do our glutei get upset with us, but we also need feet elevation while sleeping at night. And also as we know, we are all famous for our elbows, "Student's Elbow

Our lecturers get upset when they count 2 asleep, 7 yawning and 10 chits chatting away, but did they ever think why? What should be the need

for the chit chat or the yawns? The answer is a simple one. Nowadays our teaching follows mainly a didactic pattern where we are just listening to our teachers all through out and once in a while a question is thrown to the audience, but to see how many are awake and listening rather than to know if we actually know. Because of this students are unable to concentrate at a stretch and also seem to lose interest in the subject resulting in the yawns and jabbering. It is exhausting for our teachers to talk for so long, but it is equally tiring for us to listen for so long and maybe a little more because they are already so knowledgeable but it is us who have to understand, learn and imbibe the knowledge imparted to us.

It is a mutual relation that we teachers and students share. We definitely want to be the reason behind their blooming smile but they need help us develop an interest in the subject. Instead of only didactic lectures we should have interactive lectures with a break of 5 minutes to move around and prepare ourselves for the next lecture.

Interactive lectures involve every student in class drawing his interest and attention to the subject.

Along with power points and the black boards we could have quizzes, be shown documentaries, have lessons in the form of plays, and involve the student to the basic level by asking them to make power points once in a while. Basically what we want is not to just sit and listen, but be an active part of the lecture itself. This will not only help us concentrate and learn better, but since we will enjoy our interactive sessions we will not only develop a liking towards the subject but also will we want to learn and read more by ourselves. Not only would this improve a student's academics or the student teacher relations but would also help in the development of communication skills which is the most important aspect of a doctor patient relationship.

The medical education system needs to change to initiate thinking, analysis and application. So, how would you want to feel sitting beside me behind the bench?