

Rethink, Research, Reform & Revive

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I had appeared for pre-medical entrance exam consecutively twice before landing here at NKPSIMS (a private medical college). Certainly I was ashamed of myself for not being able to do better, not being able to enter one of those coveted government colleges. I remember my parents face when they were paying fees for the first time, they were very happy but I could see underneath their happiness was a worry of supporting the rest of family and fulfilling everyone's needs with the little money that was left after paying my hefty fees.

There was an urge inside me to prove that I can do something extraordinary with life. Around me were hundred and fifty students who were going to get a degree but my best buddy and me wanted something more out of this time spent here. During Dean's address, we overheard a word, not realizing that we just got something to stand out from the flock. That word which was emphasized on the very first day by our teachers was none other than 'Research'. We were told about the innumerable opportunities research brings in our lives and the different ways to go about it. There are national and international universities who fund researches. Moreover there is good material available online and in journals where we can increase the scopes of our vision.

The first professional year of MBBS came with its own challenges. The hectic study schedule and the fact that every single day was bringing new and exciting things in life pushed our research dreams onto the back seat. From the thrilling & shaky anatomy dissections to the mild and mellow physiology practical hall and from the colorful test tubes in biochemistry practical to the beautiful new faces around us, we were in complete euphoria. That was the only time we studied sincerely.

Then came second year, the year where you are expected to do a lot but you are not in a zone to comprehend the importance of time. We were in our own world of satisfaction and tranquility. That was the time when research re-entered in our lives and we submitted our proposals for ICMR STS. Not everyone gets selected in a national level research forum, same happened with me. I had made my mind to give up research dreams when my guide, a strong and honest woman encouraged me to complete what I had started.

My first research was a house to house survey in a slum area under the supervision of UHTC of NKPSIMS. Along with my friends I started collecting samples in the peak hours of afternoon after our college finished. Roaming in the society, going up to the common people, touching their lives was just a magical experience for us.

It brought a sense of responsibility into our novice brains. Our community goes through many day to day problems which we as a doctor should be aware of. This sense of human empathy was getting engraved in our minds.

When I entered medical field, doctors were considered a final authority for deciding any kind of ambiguity in patient's mind, but with the rapid advent of internet culture patients have become impatient and any degree of competence or compliance you show towards them, they are still unsatisfied. We think this has led to increase in doctor-patient quarrels. But if we try to introspect a bit the mistake is equally ours. We fail to communicate, clarify and most importantly to relate to their situation. Some of newer doctors today are overtly arrogant, haughty and vain towards patients. It all comes down to our curriculum, we are thought how to treat the disease but not how to treat the patient. I feel communication skills, morality and empathy showing should be inculcated into our curriculum so that we grow to become responsible doctors.

Research was the way I chose. I started enjoying going to people and talking to them. People always warmly welcomed us wherever we went. Never did we feel that we are being dishonored or disregarded by anyone. We got the opportunity to go from slum households to the schools, from Anganwadis to the UHTC hospital. Everywhere we got to learn something new and interesting. I even asked my friends to do researches and helped them from the conception to conclusion of their research project. One after another I finished three research projects under NKPSTS and one under MUHS-STRG. Meanwhile I understood that there is lot of potential in all of us collectively to find out solutions to every problem that comes towards us. It was academics but with a conscience and we started feeling proud of what we did.

Today after completing nearly six years of MBBS, after achieving eleven honors, two MUHS, Nashik gold medals, three vice chancellor's certificate of merit and five published articles; the thing I am most proud of is the fact that I chose research. I chose to get out into the community, had those little chats with people and laughed with them. Even today do I remember the endless data handling and analysis we did, the innumerable corrections that use to surface up in front of madam in otherwise perfect looking article. I believe that research has a huge role in shaping me into what I am today, I am very thankful to the extensive research

culture we have at our college. I am thankful towards the teachers who are related to research department and work so hard to inculcate the meaning of research into our lives.

We as whole are giving something to medical science, helping it grow which otherwise would've been impossible from a government institution. The tender nourishment that we get here to be able to think is rare in government colleges. Today when people come to know that I'm from private institute they look me down, they instantly ignore me, but little do they know how content, peaceful and happy I'm from inside. Students studying in government colleges may be miles ahead in academics but I'm sure they have no idea about research in their undergraduate years.

In western world or even in central institutes like AIIMS and JIPMER, students are encouraged to dream, question and to find their solutions by themselves. Therefore they are pretty ahead of us in understanding of basic concepts. Here in the periphery we are being 'taught academics' while there in the core they are 'learning academics'. This small difference makes them stand apart and keeps us ordinary yet again. It is the legacy that they follow which make them legends.

The other thing that hurts our prospects of building a great nation is our mentality. It is sad that we live in society where only clinical subjects are worshipped and the doctors in basic sciences and para-clinical subjects are treated in unruly manner and not even considered to be worthy of being medical personnel. We need to change our views; no country can succeed with such a mentality where learned people themselves scavenge on the basic steps that helped them grow. Today we are masters and lead the world in medicine, OBGY or surgery, but mind you our two important pillars 'Research' and 'Basic sciences' are too weak to sustain for long. It is best in our interest if we start recuperating before it's too late.