

Choosing anaesthesia as a career: A postgraduate student's perspective

Sir,

I remember how two years back, after a long yet exhilarating wait, it was finally my turn to enter the conference room full of postgraduate (PG) counselling faculty members and aspiring PG candidates. Like my other peers,^[1] there was not a slightest of a clue as to what a remarkable journey I was set to embark upon as I put forth my choice of discipline for residency training to be Anaesthesiology and Critical Care.

From having the most anxious and petrified patients sail through their seemingly impossible surgeries comfortably as they are transitioned in and out of anaesthesia, to having a heart restart under the palms of your hands during the strenuous and gruelling task of cardiopulmonary resuscitation, anaesthesiology training has been like being presented with a bouquet of miraculous experiences. From painless labour to awake craniotomies, from witnessing a lung go down for thoracotomy to being a beholder to the beauty of a beating heart after successful reversal of cardioplegia, from safely intubating a neonate to safely extubating an elderly patient and from awake fibreoptic intubations to sedated non-intubated surgeries, the magical art and the skilful practice of anaesthesia is an enthralling experience. Being an anaesthesiologist proffers myriad such moments where your intervention will save the patient's life or at least buy some time till something fruitful can

be achieved in the overall management of his illness. It is in those moments that you feel overwhelmed by a sense of profound gratitude to the almighty for blessing you with the opportunity to be in this glorious field.

But this priceless journey in the field of anaesthesia is also fraught with trials. The high stakes environment of an operation theatre challenges you to bring out your level best – mentally, physically as well as emotionally. It entrusts you with the challenge to act briskly while remaining balanced in your mind and composed in your emotion especially in the most nerve-racking situations. It teaches you to be steady yet swift, tranquil yet tough and grounded yet feisty. Anaesthesia being a team practice involving varied medical and paramedical personnel together with an obligation to explain procedural risks and benefits to the patients and their attendants who are absolutely lay to the medical jargon, confers you with finesse as a communicator.

It is this ingenious and intense training that put anaesthesiologists at the forefront of the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic.^[2] While preparing to lead the war against this complex and devastating problem with no clarity as to what challenges these unprecedented times held for us, we jumped into the battlefield with a hope to put our skills to the service of mankind. As we toiled forward, we reckoned that we already possess the ability to face tough situations with dexterity by the virtue of our training. And although there are still quite a few miles to go before we can call it off, there is an unwavering hope that we will emerge with whole new perspectives, approaches and vistas not only to our field of anaesthesia but to humanity at large.

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Conflicts of interest

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