

One flu over the doctor's nest

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I visited the doc, was feeling quite ill...
Hoping for comfort or maybe a pill
Was taken by surprise when he barely did glance,
To explain my ailment, hardly gave me a chance!

Papers in a sheaf were handed to me
Blood tests and a scan, even a CT!
For over a day I ran from pillar to pole
The bills in my pocket – they burnt a hole.

The reports he scanned and shook his head
“Hmmm...let's try a new drug instead.”
Each pill from which, I was to learn,
Pharma and doc, more cash would earn.

For a 'second opinion' to a friend he sent
Upon meeting whom, I was quick to repent.
Merit aside, a degree he'd bought.
Of medical ken, he knowledge had not!

“Our system is foul!” I winced in pain.
'It's no wonder we face a brain drain.
Diligently those who honour their seat
Earn barely enough to make ends meet

With generous compensation, the corporates entice
For questionable ethics – humanity pays the price.
I had reckoned this to be a noble profession.
It's become a business is my honest confession.

Of medical men, if this be the plight
An ignorant man would be a doctor's delight!
For, when I sought treatment for a simple flu,
Was he too busy to realise...
I was a doctor too?

An undergraduate student's view of the medical humanities

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For the new medical student, admission into medical college marks the culmination of years of study and effort, and the beginning of a new era in his life. He is on course to becoming a doctor. There is enthusiasm as well as expectation. There are dreams which await fulfilment.

But this excitement does not last long, as he starts experiencing challenges and stresses that he had not foreseen. These problems can be listed under two broad categories – scholastic and personal. Scholastic problems include the sudden transition from the study pattern of 10+2 and CET, to the vast and complex one of the MBBS; the fear of failing for the first time; and the pressure to secure a post-graduate seat. Personal and interpersonal issues include adapting to hostel life, the trauma of studying in a language in which one is not fluent; and peer pressure and groupism based on class, regional, or scholastic differences.

My observations as a student

As an undergraduate, I have observed that the nature of these

challenges and tensions varies as the student goes through the different years of his education.

The first year is generally spent in becoming acclimatised to the new environment. Most of the students get to know each other in the course of the year and segregate themselves into groups, mainly based on regions. Interpersonal conflicts are minimal, but personal, linguistic and scholastic difficulties are dominant.

In the second year there is a lighter syllabus and relatively more time, opening up opportunities for various extracurricular activities. However, group dynamics are at their peak, with each group trying to dominate the others, and this adds to existing stressors. Lack of confidence, inadequate communication skills and insufficient orientation towards procedures and practices all deter students from going to the wards.

In the third year, the additional stress is that of scholastic performance, even as economic stress may become prominent for some.