



REVIEW ARTICLE

Uncertainty in a Medico's Mind: The Way Out

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Abstract

The transition from medical education to clinical practice is often marked by significant uncertainty for new medical graduates. This uncertainty stems from a variety of factors, including the complexity of real-world patient care, the application of theoretical knowledge to practical scenarios, and the emotional and psychological weight of clinical decision-making. New medicos are thrust into environments where they must navigate intricate medical conditions, make decisions under time pressure, and manage expectations from patients, families, and healthcare teams. Despite rigorous training, the gap between theoretical knowledge and clinical application can foster self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy.

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“The core predicament of medicine — the thing that makes being a patient so wrenching, being a doctor so difficult, and being a part of society that pays the bills they run up so vexing — is uncertainty ... Medicine's ground state is uncertainty. And wisdom — for both the patients and doctors — is defined by how one copes with it”

Atul Gawande

While undergoing training in medical colleges, sometimes in our student or resident ship days, we feel that we are not progressing and that a sense of uncertainty surrounds us - usually, it is a sense of self-exhaustion. This feeling is further compounded when we come to know that our classmates from school are entering lucrative jobs, have started earning handsome salaries, and even enjoying overseas holidays, while we are toiling with our studies on one hand and back-breaking hospital duties on the other. Some of us will choose to blame those around us for our predicament, some blame the system, while others will criticize themselves in such a way that will paralyze them, while some will actually overcome these obstacles and move forward. But what is certain is that there is no lack of reasons that inhibit us in our path to self-realization and success in life [1].

Uncertainty in medicos mind is reaped during their initial days of formative education at the school level when a student decides to choose their profession. It is not the desire to serve humanity which is the prime essence for which a student pursues to choose medicine as their career. Rather during their pursuit of becoming a medic, this is highlighted as a safe green pasture

molded with financial gain rather than service to humanity. It is from this desire coupled with family instinct (especially first-generation doctors) and coaching centers that they start their profession. They look up to the materialistic objects of successful doctors, undermining the effort (education and training) put in by them in their formative years. Later, as they ascend through the ladder the intense pressure of studying lures them to avenues that distract them from their goal. Additionally, school peers early life settlement further derails their futuristic goals. The desire for early success (which cannot be out of the blue) drives all the negative instincts as described by the author. It requires a change in the mindset of the student most of whom choose the profession by default and pressure, rather than by desire. Choosing the right mentor as delved in detail in the mentorship program of the National Medical Commission is of paramount importance.

So, when do these dark thoughts creep into our minds and disturb our steady progress toward our noble goal of becoming a good doctor? What are the reasons of these rude interruptions in a budding medical student's or a resident's mind?

1. The pursuit of impossible dreams

We all like to dream and say that we have dreams, but some of us tend to make them a way of life, unable to break away from the illusion and be grounded in reality. In addition, this makes us live in our imaginary world as if we are waiting for a miracle to happen, and so we take no action to achieve and fulfill our dreams. When we don't take a step and are only sucked into

our dreams, the likelihood of them coming true is significantly lower. To improve our chances, we must break free of the big dreams we are immersed in. Instead, we must try to break them down into small dreams or, alternatively, into steps that we need to take in order to achieve the bigger dream. No dream can materialize without sacrifices, so we have to stop and ask ourselves, what are we prepared to sacrifice in order to achieve our dream – our social media time, our procrastination, our daydreaming?

Most of us have big dreams that we strive to achieve, but we sometimes aim too high or expect quick success that is almost impossible. It is very important to understand that your dreams can become goals for life, but you need to learn to set them in implementable ways - analyze the resources you have, how long you will need to achieve them and how realistic they are. When you learn to set goals for success that are achievable, you will also feel satisfaction and you can track your progress. Moreover, even if the goals that you set yourself becoming illogical, there is a way out, try to rewrite them or break them down into smaller goals, to ensure your goals are met.

2. The inability to concentrate on one task at a time

Many people are led by the principle of "a few more minutes on Facebook and then I'll start..." The problem is that our world is rich in various technological platforms that suck us in and it is very difficult to ignore them. Thanks to these diverse technologies and our addiction to them, we can't concentrate on just one task. As a result, we lag behind at work, have a

pile of case sheets to be completed, dressings to be done and post-operative patients to be reviewed. Only after that we can start to study for the upcoming seminar or journal club. So, if we remain drawn and addicted to screens when will we study? In order to be more efficient, we need to set task deadlines and track them in order to be able to accomplish them successfully.

3. The inability to maintain consistency

We often start doing several tasks at once and are not able to finish any of them. We are sure that it's happened to most of us at least once in our lives. This includes exercising, dieting, learning something new (like a language), having a hobby and so on, and things we started to do with great excitement and stop after a week or a month. There is only one reason for this concession - lack of perseverance and failure to set measures of success or desired results. In Japan, there is a special term for this syndrome – The Three-Day Monk, the number three symbolizes the average amount of days it takes for the excitement to fade and we give up what we started. To overcome this syndrome, you can use the kaizen approach that teaches how to succeed in tasks by working slowly and continuously over time. Success in the medical field cannot be a flash in the pan, our training teaches us to make success a way of life, because we simply can't afford failures. Maintaining consistency is extremely important in academics, clinical work, and research.

4. The inability to feel responsible

Not every bad thing that happens in our life is necessarily our fault, but most of

it is our responsibility. We can blame other people or obstacles along the way but that will not change the situation and certainly will not solve it. However, by taking full responsibility for the events, we can improve, learn and build a better future. If in a limb salvage surgery the patient goes into renal failure, there is no harm in realizing the mistake, amputate the limb and save the patient. The ability to admit and correct our mistakes is the first and most important step on our path to success. We must learn to take responsibility for our decisions and our life in order to be able to turn our ideas and dreams into reality. 'I am responsible, the buck stops here' should be our motto in life.

5. Not being supported by the environment

One of the secrets to personal success is the support we receive from our institution, our teachers and our loved ones. But sometimes instead of getting support from them, we get a lack of understanding and negativity, things that make it very difficult for us to continue on our path. In such a situation, it is very important to relax and not to fight or argue with the people who are close to us. Instead, we have to tell them how much we love them, explain to them that the things we are doing are very important to us, clarify to them what we are trying to achieve, and how important their support is to us. Issues like permission to attend conference and present a paper, getting first authorship in our research publication, permission to graduate from simulator to patient for performing laparoscopic surgery can be freely discussed

with teachers and seniors and we can always put our point of view most politely [1].

6. Plagued with self-criticism

Self-criticism can be of great benefit but at high doses, it can actually cause us to become attracted to negative thoughts and settle in our problems. As a result, critical thoughts feed our brains and make us feel sad; this can lead to depression. Not only does self-criticism not lead us to success, but it also keeps us away from it. We aren't saying that self-criticism isn't good, we just have to approach it consciously, so that we control it and it does not start controlling us. This is what will help us to snap out of our negative thoughts and intelligently reevaluate the various possibilities that we face for future success.

7. Pointing fingers

There are two kinds of people in the world - those who blame everyone around them and those who take responsibility for their mistakes and actions. The former will point an accusing finger at the government, the country they live in or even their parents – who according to them, are the factors that did not give them the chance to succeed in life. 'I am here because my parents wanted me to become a doctor' is a dangerous line of thought. It means the individual has failed to develop an interest in Medicine and now is blaming his/her parents. 'My thesis does not have clinical photographs because my colleague who shot them, misplaced them' – again instead of accepting the responsibility, blaming a colleague. There is however the second type of people, those who take responsibility for their actions achieved the

goals they set in life. People of the second type know that success depends on the effort they invest, the persistence, the goals they set, and the knowledge that blaming the other will lead them nowhere. Surprisingly, failures can even motivate them to achieve success [2].

8. Previous Failures

Each of us experiences failures, sometimes we can try and do everything in our power, but we simply will not get the desired result. In this case, we have two options: to sink into depression and continue to feel sorry for ourselves or we can analyze the situation, understand that we have done things wrong and try starting again from zero. If after watching the teacher perform a flap surgery we try to emulate him in an emergency situation and the flap fails then should we give up on that flap or go back to our books and atlases, our YouTube videos and then discuss again with our teacher, perhaps help him next time when he performs the same flap, and try to master the technique! We can achieve success from experiencing failure. J.K. Rowling, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Stephen King, Walt Disney, Oprah Winfrey, Thomas Edison, Abraham Lincoln all made big in life eventually, despite failing and being rejected by the world in the start of their career. Failures are stepping stones towards success and nothing more serious [3].

Conclusion

When we enter the medical profession it is not just a job choice; it's a deep calling. Those who choose this path are driven by a strong commitment to reduce

suffering, improve well-being, and make a lasting impact on people's health and society. Medicine is where science meets compassion and so being a doctor cannot be just another profession, It is about giving, healing, and serving, going beyond personal gain. Once we have chosen this life, there is no room for uncertainties in our mind. So, we must have a clear clutter free mind, an appetite for hard work with scanty appreciation and we must be prepared to make sacrifices in terms of social time and social media time. Techniques like meditation, yoga, or breathing exercises are useful to cope with stress.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declares that they do not have conflict of interest.

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