



Down the Memory Lane by Dr Raman Baweja



Author: Dr Raman Baweja

MBBS, MD, MS, Associate Professor,
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral
Health and Public Health Sciences, Penn
State College of Medicine

Co-Director of Child Psychiatry Consult
Liaison Services, Penn State Children
Hospital Hershey, PA, USA

Email: rbaweja@pennstatehealth.psu.edu

Twitter: [@drramanbaweja](https://twitter.com/drramanbaweja)

Author: Prof. Rakesh K Chadda

Professor & Head, Chief, National Drug
Dependence Treatment Centre
AIIMS, New Delhi

Email: drrakeshchadda@gmail.com

Colladon, 1209 Geneva, Switzerland

Twitter: [@NormanSartorius](https://twitter.com/NormanSartorius)

Growing up, I always heard family and friends calling me “*Chota* (Punjabi Word for Junior) Doctor”, even before I knew the meaning of these words. They called me because my father was a registered medical practitioner in a small town in North India and they just assumed I would be a doctor when I grow up. Well, my favorite subjects were Mathematics and Science. Furthermore, I also enjoyed helping others,

so it was easy for me to make a career choice to be a “*Doctor*”.

In medical college, like many medical students, at one point I wanted to be a neurosurgeon or cardiothoracic surgeon, while at other times thought to be orthopedic surgeon. In contrast, I enjoyed psychology and cherished my psychiatry rotation in medical school as well. I was fortunate to have family close by and saw my nephews and nieces growing up. It was fascinating to see how children interact with the environment and how they react to different family members and at times how they control others. I would do some tricks (behavioral interventions, which I was not aware of at that time) to change their difficult/challenging behaviors. This was my intern year, when my sister pointed out about my interactions with kids and how much I seemed to be enjoying those observations and tricks with children and commented “are you thinking about being a child psychiatrist?”. I think that was an “aha” moment for me.

I was fortunate to secure MD psychiatry at reputed [Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research](#) (PGIMER), Chandigarh. My family was very supportive of my decision. However, there were some unsolicited suggestions/advice from acquaintances about my plan to continue psychiatry when I also secured an orthopedic surgery residency position through the All-India entrance exam. I sat back and put thoughts together and asked myself “what I would like to do 30 years from now and I would be as excited as I am today in the morning when I will be ready to go to work?”. My self-reflection further reinforced my decision to continue to work in the field of mental health. I am grateful

Down the memory lane

that I had great mentors, teachers and friends at PGIMER, who helped me to grow professional and personally. Wished to stay in academia in India, but did not get a senior residency position because of government policies. At that time, there was no formal training (DM program) for child psychiatry in India, so I started looking for options around the world to follow my dream.

My academic career in the United States of America started with General Psychiatry Residency training from the Penn State College of Medicine in Hershey, PA followed by Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship training. I was also interested in clinical research; I intentionally elected to do a Master of Science (MS) program in Public Health Science along with my psychiatry training to develop the analytic skills necessary to conduct research. I am fortunate to have great mentors and collaborators, which helped me exponentially in establishing my career and was able to secure research funding, published more than 60 research papers in reputed journals and involvement in advocacy in the last 7 years.

There were many times in my career when I had to make some difficult decisions like “what post-graduation specialty I should go for” or “how to pursue my dream: to be a child and adolescent psychiatrist.” My parents’ advice – “do what is your passion in life, stay persistent and do your best and do not worry about the outcome”, was tremendously helpful to me in making decisions. Another thing which supports me in my career is collaboration with others either in the same institute or internationally to continue to grow professionally; as the proverb tells us, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together”.

One last but most important thing which I cannot emphasize enough is balance between personal and professional life. I always felt more productive in my clinical

and scholarly work, when I spent time with family and friends and engaged in outdoor activities. I have a passion for adventurous activities with an adrenaline rush. I have already enjoyed thrilling activities like skydiving, snorkeling in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, Jet skiing, swimming with dolphins, Edge Walk on the CN tower at Toronto, rock climbing, etc. I have some more in my bucket list in the coming time including expedition to Mount Everest and bungee jumping.