

Tales of a fledgling dentist!

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Abstract:

Life of a student in under-graduation is filled with fun and adventure along with a healthy learning process. The experiences a student undergoes during his training period remains with that person eternally. This article describes the journey of an undergraduate student, the role and crucial importance of a mentor and the improvements that can be brought about in the academic system to ensure the proper moulding of a budding dentist.

Keywords: Mentor, Student, Training period

The other day I was having a long chat in our very own coffee house with a friend who had just returned from the USA. I was keeping abreast with the technicalities and intricacies of the practices followed in the developed countries. As we continued sipping the strong filter coffee, my memory tapered five years down the lane when I was into the third year of my under graduation. We had graduated from studying the lifeless basic sciences to switching over to the more juicy applications of these subjects on the guinea pigs ready to be butchered by us freshers.

I was posted into the Oral and Maxillofacial surgery. The staff in-charge had lured us into the deal that if we succeeded in answering the chair side viva we would be given the opportunity to start with the patients by beginning to administer the anesthetic blocks. "That was a cake walk!", I thought. The viva went off without much hassles and few of us were permitted to start with the patient preparation. I donned my face mask, head cap and gloves and meticulously arranged the instruments.

My heart was pounding hard with excitement which, I thought it was audible to the world around me! The patient allotted to me had a history of hypertension and he admitted that he was very anxious to undergo an extraction at the hands of an amateur. An undercurrent of envy ran through me as I faced the same anxiety but had to pretend to be a bold tigress. I convinced us both; myself mentally and the patient verbally that a simple extraction procedure was not a big deal and it would go about uneventfully. But, I believe, our vibrations convey much more about our convictions rather than the mere lip sympathy. The patient was fully convinced by then that I was bluffing but he had no escape routes. "To venture causes anxiety, but not to venture is to lose one's self... And to venture in the highest is precisely to be conscious of one's self." With all this high dosage of self-motivation, I started checking all his vitals and administered the nerve block for

extraction. The sweltering heat outside and anxiety cumulated, and the patient went into a state of syncope. I was sure that I had made way for the patient to enter the heavenly abode and the first day was going to be the final day of my professional career.

Meanwhile, the situation tensed a little further when my colleague had pierced right into the parotid gland to cause a transient facial nerve palsy to the patient. My friend had a classic stoic appearance resembling the Bell's palsy than the poor patient who actually faced the distress! By this time, all the post graduate students and staff had come to manage the complication. They managed the situation with utmost concentration and ease. Our teachers gave us the valuable lesson that sailing through any situation requires the presence of mind to use the knowledge that we had acquired at the right time. We had recuperated out of the situation successfully.

Sitting back on the coffee table, I could get the aerial view of the entire scenario. Would the situation be a tad better if we had "mock preps" which would have prepared us mentally to face the actual scenario? As we practice on phantom heads before starting with the actual patient procedures, the possibility of creating a pseudo scenario where the fresh trainees can get the actual feel of the situation can be incorporated in the curriculum.

I learnt another important lesson that day. Life is always full of challenges and we dread to tread the path of unknown. As Rowling has rightly quoted "It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might not have lived at all, in which case you have failed by default!" The problems we face in our life is because we attach over importance to the events. The events attain an enormous magnitude while we grow smaller in our minds. The mistakes we have made in the past make us humble and the wise use their skill to surmount the event and scale greater heights in their lives.