



North Coast Physician

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Cover Photo

"PELICAN OVER KLOPP LAKE"

Stephen Kamelgarn, M.D.

The Editorial and Publications Committee encourages our member's comments for publication. Please submit electronically prior to the 15th of the month preceding publication. hdncms@sbcglobal.net

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Beyond The Impossible **Anirudh Rai, M.D.**



The Greeks had many myths and stories that exemplify the capabilities of mankind. In many of them, we see both humans and demigods take on impossible tasks and overcome them. The Labors of Heracles, the journey of Psyche and Cupid and Perseus's defeat of The Medusa remind to us, that we can be conquerors despite the seeming impossibility of the task before us. It is as if, when humans are given a known impossible task, they face it head on. Edgar A. Guest said it best:

"Somebody said that it couldn't be done,

But he with a chuckle replied

That 'maybe it couldn't, but he would be one

Who wouldn't say so till he tried.'

So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin

On his face. If he worried he hid it.

He started to sing as he tackled the thing

That couldn't be done—and he did it!"

We all have the capability to overcome, the ability to become who we aspire to be. We can be the heroes we want to be, living to overcome the impossible.

As I approach the final stretch of my Residency, I can't help but feel that this is my personal overcoming of the impossible. Although I wanted to be a doctor, I never dreamt that it was actually possible. I came from India, from a family who were high school teachers, and with almost no money. None of my family members, had more than a two year college education, which at that time was all that was needed to become a teacher. The landscape of being a doctor was foreign to me because, in my young life, I saw my parents teaching. Now in India, most higher education and occupations are gotten via intense compe-

tion, money and connections, nothing my family had. America gave my parents the opportunity to allow me to seek this dream. My dad worked hard from the bottom up: from working in gas stations to becoming a resource worker. I had often thought of this endeavor and felt as if it was impossible, always asking myself, "Can I really do this?"

History is full of moments when humans have tackled the impossible and unlocked new horizons. I've personally had multiple episodes like this, especially when I was in medical school. The enormous amount of information that was thrown at me seemed like an impossible task to learn. Like Thor, I felt that I was expected to drink the ocean from a small flask. Everyday, I was given arduous amounts of information that I was expected to have memorized and then applied in exams. I can tell you, it can be very intimidating and sometimes disheartening, but I trudged on. After all, even drinking the ocean can be done, one drop at a time. All day and night, I would spend hours upon hours reading, and trying to comprehend what I read. In all honesty, I felt it to be a Herculean task. Then came the challenge of clinical rotations.

I completed my clinical rotations at San Bernardino Arrowhead Hospital, and the time I spent in that hospital was difficult. I remember the 24 hour shifts, being yelled at by attendings, and coming in to the hospital earlier than everyone else to round and prepare for multiple exams. It was a place that tested my limits and resilience. I also remember the emotional distance between patient and physician that the physician had when conversing with the patient. Some of the attendings that I observed seemed to see the patient as a problem to be solved, rather than a person that needed

medical care.

I would round in the early morning, then round again with the team, and more often than not, have to return to each patient so I could explain what just happened. The rounding team often "talked shop," rambling on about lab values, images, and medical jargon that almost always went over the patient's head. This was off-putting for me, so I made it a habit, to not only understand, but also be able to explain, in language the patient could understand, what the team discussed.

Practical application of theoretical knowledge and explaining it to patients was a completely new experience for me. That was another labor that seemed impossible.

I remember the demoralizing humiliations that interns had to go through. Once, I was in the operating room, and the attending physician asked the intern some basic anatomy question about the surgery he was performing. The intern, being timid and dismayed, could not answer correctly, so the attending surgeon made a public spectacle, yelling "Go to the library and read the anatomy book; you will not do surgery with me, unless you know your anatomy." The intern fled the room looking fearful and found his way to the library. During the surgery, the attending physician commented that he had to do that because he was trained that way. Being the timid medical student, I kept quiet, but thought to myself: "What a jerk," and then a following thought came, "How can this culture be broken if such acts and actions are carried to the next generation." So I worked, and studied hard, making sure that I not only understood the material but also behaving in a manner that would not provoke such hostility.

I will be completing my residency at **"Opinion", Continued on Pg 20**

“Opinion”, Continued From Pg. 5

Providence St. Joseph Eureka Family Medicine at the end of June. This has been such an amazing experience for me. It was as if all the prior hurdles were mere dry runs for this task. The challenge to finally behave and enact what it means to be a doctor, has been the most fearful step. No longer will I have seniors watching me like a hawk; now I will be taking care of patients with larger responsibilities on myself. My attendings were there, guiding and monitoring me for large mistakes, but they’ve always allowed me to experience and learn from my own mistakes. It’s been very humbling.

FW Boreham had a great quote in his essay: “If a man admires and appreciates art, he is an artist in the making; if a man admires and appreciates music, he is an embryo musician, and surely, by the same token, if a man admires and appreciates courage, it follows that, somewhere in his soul, a hero slumbers.”

Impossibilities assume many shapes and forms. Ancient humanity gave them colorful images: ogres, trolls, dragons,

and the abyss, and each of them had a protagonist who overcame them all. Within us all, resides a hero, a heroine, a conqueror. After all, fairytales exist not to tell us that dragons exist, but rather, fairytales exist to remind us all that dragons can be defeated. I have faced many impossibilities in my path to becoming a physician, and overcoming each one has taught me to always take courage from hardships. Many more impossibilities are on the horizon, and as I take my first step towards being an attending, I pray that I never forget: to behave professionally, to never demean, to talk to the patient and not the pathology, and to never lose heart in impossibilities. §

“Sorrel”, Continued From Pg 9

together expertise and resources in a way that maximizes the potential for a really amazing and successful program.”

The center’s residential home sits on a thirteen-acre farm off of Indianola Road in Eureka and features open fields, forests and a scenic pond. This unique property creates space for engagement in nature, the cultivation of food for the center and animal therapy with the farm’s sheep, rabbits, alpacas and other animals.

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Thank You to Dr. Gorham - Instructing Cal Poly Humboldt PreMedical Students the art of suturing.



Thank You to Drs. Hong and Zwerdling and Cal Poly Humboldt PreMedical Society Co-President, Brodie Lyons for “manning” the HUM PET table at the HCOE/St. Bernards Career Fair in May.



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