

When a Surgeon is a Patient Himself Undergoing Surgery: My Personal Experience

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We were told in our medical course that a good surgeon should have an eagle's eyes, a lion's heart, a lady's fingers, a horse's feet, and a camel's stomach. I feel that we should add two more qualities of a good surgeon and that he/she should learn to live in anger-free zones and have utter tolerance. Ritually advancing communication skills are a significant part of today's surgeon's personality. Punctuality in attitude and a smile always on your face as an ornament will save you from many disasters. But today, I am talking about the 1960s and comparing it with 2022. You will remember both lows and highs in this true experience.

It was a miserable night on June 11, 1961, Sunday, as I was suffering from agonizing pain in the abdomen and vomiting in Allahabad, today's Prayagraj. I had passed high school, and my admission was already done in mathematics at CAV Intermediate College. My parents took me to TB Sapru Hospital for treatment, where incidentally my class fellow's mother was the chief matron. She came promptly and went along with the ward's sister to the surgeon on duty to consult about me. Dr S was plumped in an old-timer resting chair and was severely drunk and did not pay any attention and shouted at the matron that these buggers eat all wrong things in the day and disturb us at night. He instructed her to take me to Cholera Hospital, Phaphamau. My father requested the most eminent physician of the city, a senior Georgian Dr RC, who diagnosed the illness as acute intestinal obstruction and advised urgent surgery. Dr N, MS, FRCS, performed the operation, and I underwent Meckel diverticulectomy and gradually recovered. Dr N advised my father to get me into the medical profession so that I will not only cater for myself but also do my best for the patients after the experience at this hospital. That

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was the worst thing that can happen if a doctor behaves this way or is drunk heavily on duty. My father got my admission changed to biology. Change of subjects in intermediate changed my fate.

His abusive irresponsible words rang in my ears. This led me to finally become Professor and Head of Surgery Department at KG Medical University, Lucknow, and to hold many administrative posts postretirement. I always aimed to have distributed love and kindness in behavior and attitude in anger-free zones.

Pronounced delay in deciding for surgery since 1995.

The symptoms had begun in 1995 but were very mild, so I was advised medical treatment, and the symptoms kept changing with time and again but never disappeared. Fed up with interference with my lifestyle as a busy surgeon, administrator, teacher, and social worker doing significant social works, including tobacco control, I decided in 2016 to finally get operated on. My highly competent colleague professor and former HOD of Urology at KGMU scheduled operation for me on July 12. However, 6 days prior to the surgery, he suggested me to try one new combination of medicine. As luck would have been, the symptoms nearly disappeared, P flowmetry was positive, and my prostate weight reduced from 28 to 18 gm; thus, the operation was deferred. But then due to preoccupation with academic deliberation and some other reasons, I kept avoiding and delaying till I developed the side effects of finasteride and even bilateral inguinal hernia. The quality of my life became worse. At nighttime, almost every hour, I had to pass urine, which had poor flow, and by this time, my PVR became 190 mL when I felt my blunder and went to Prof D for deciding and performing the surgery. This time, it was decided and finally fixed up. The embarrassment of having someone help you walk to the bathroom, feeling constipated but yet being afraid to go to the washroom, and having someone to look at your buttocks during enema administration, and the pain associated with the catheterization, venflons, and IV fluids were quite a discomfoting experience. We normally don't express these factors.

One more and much more important reason for the delay, I was waiting to solve issues to finally prepare my "will," but I could

not and surrendered it in the name of Almighty God. I was advised retrograde urethra cystogram from one of the best diagnostic laboratories. But the radiology technician did the very common mistake and probably used a used xylocaine jelly, unsterile gloves, a reused unsterile thin catheter, and lo, bleeding, severe pain, and a horrible experience stirred my confidence in humanity! As expected, it led to urinary tract infection, and it is imaginable, with lots of antibiotics starting from April 9, 2022. Urine culture and sensitivity showed *E. coli* with an insignificant colony count, but in view of symptoms, I had to stop other antibiotics and use Inj. Amikacin 500 gm IV 8 hourly. I was admitted on April 20. The catheter was passed by Prof D himself, and the difference was magical. This is called real "expertise," God bless him. Urine from the bladder was clear, so no bladder wash was done, and a lot of IV fluids and orally water and liquids were taken. The urinary bag was emptied several times. I had to lie on my left side, lest the catheter sensation disturbed me. The next day, I walked to the operation theater more like a surgeon as Dr D asked me to wear a surgeon's dress. Very grateful to my wife, daughter, my real soul friend Sanjiv, and my dear Shadab. I never informed anyone else, and this team cared like angels.

I was operated on under spinal anesthesia. My loving students Dr Himanshu, an expert anesthetist, and Dr H, my cardiologist, took good care of me. Prof D showed me the full TUR procedure on the monitor, and I got completely lost and was seeing his magical hands working as a master craftsman. He performed surgery so well that I don't have enough words of gratitude for him. The operation was finished in 45 minutes, and after an hour post-op, I was shifted to my deluxe room. The love, care, caressing, and expert rounds, along with the dedicated team of Dr D, made me feel highly excited and happy. My recovery was very nice, thanks to the blessings of all, care of the team at the hospital, and my personalized moral and technical support. I was discharged after the removal of the catheter and passing urine. I nearly jumped in happiness because I was watching a nice urine stream after 1995. Kudos to all team of Prof D and Dr BPS, the owner of the hospital. I am proud of the Georgians who did complete the mission. I will positively state that I never thought of getting operated by anyone except my own students of yesteryears and heroes of today.

The real lesson to learn. The anesthetist ensured that I never had any pain in the postoperative period. After nearly 2 weeks, I kept improving, and now, I have started my routine activities, including even consultations for patients.

MESSAGE TO IMBIBE

I am a surgeon myself and routinely do surgeries. The word "operation" and "operation theater" instill fear and awe in the mind of the patient and their family. My wife is a doctor, and still I could see the uncertainty written large on her face prior to my surgery.

Treat a patient with compassion and have a humane approach; it will raise their confidence, and they will be more receptive to the surgery and treatment. Their recovery will also be faster. If you are a doctor or surgeon, then don't interfere or question the expert's advice. Follow the treatment. I have narrated three incidents when I have had a brush with a surgeon as a patient, and all the three have left a lasting impression on me. They portray a surgeon's approach to a patient.

Dr S was arrogant and irresponsible with no consideration for the patient.

Dr N was a thorough professional and a very good surgeon.

Dr D was a thorough professional and a very good surgeon with a humane approach and full of compassion.

You must train and trust your students so well that you may take their treatment when needed. My soul feels satisfied that the seeds I had sown are coming back my way as fruits. I bow my head in reverence to the Almighty for his blessings as I am getting back to serving humanity as a surgeon.

REMINDED OF TWO QUOTES

"A successful surgeon should be a person who, when asked to name the three best surgeons in the world, would have difficulty deciding on the other two."

~ Denton Cooley

"And if the surgeon is like a poet, then the scars you have made on countless bodies are like verses into the fashioning of which you have poured your soul."

~ Richard Selzer