



# Uncovering the Journey of a Successful Eye Surgeon & Secrets to Establish a Successful Medical Practice

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## Opinion

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## Opinion

### Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the importance of hygiene, health, and hospital and health professionals. A career in modern medicine is indeed long and a medical student needs to overcome several challenges to become a successful doctor. It is important for medical student(s)/ young doctors to stay motivated to overcome obstacles faced during this difficult journey. The (5 Ts) Teaching, Training, Teamwork, Transparency, and Time management play a significant role to shape a successful career in medicine. The doctor-patient trust can be strengthened by following 5 Cs: Care, Compassion, Communication, Competence, and Cost. I was fortunate to find mentor(s) who helped me to overcome challenges and guided me at each and every step of medical career. This article is based on our recently published memoir: A Hippocratic Odyssey: Lessons From a Doctor Couple on Life in Medicine, Challenges, and Doctorpreneurship (Dr. Suresh K Pandey and Dr. Vidushi Sharma, SuVi Eye Hospital and Lasik Laser Center, Kota, Published by Bloomsbury, India).

### My Journey from Lantern to Light

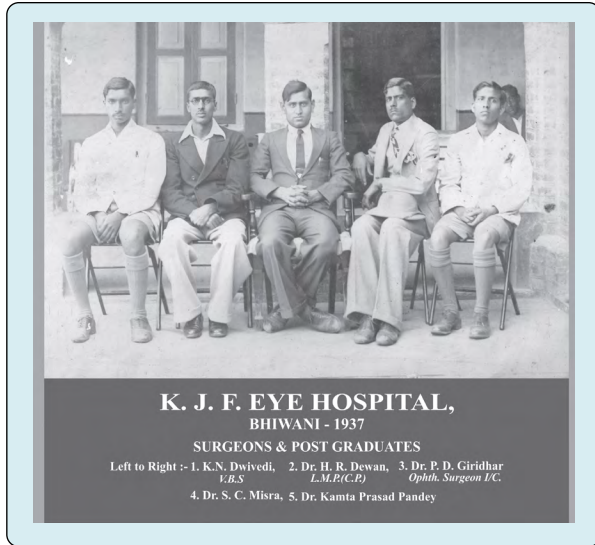
I was born in a village called Mohna, district Chittorgarh in Rajasthan. My father, Shri Kameshwar Prasad Pandey was a school-teacher and my mother, Smt. Maya Pandey, was a housewife. The financial condition of our family was not too well-off, and my village lacked basic infrastructure like electricity and roads, but I found solace in my studies with dream to become a doctor. I used to study under lantern after dusk as there was no electricity during that time.

I completed primary school education at my school in Mohna and secondary school education from a nearby

village school Eklingpura. I also obtained an NTSE (National Talent Search Exam) scholarship for a year in 1980. At age of 12, I joined the Government Higher Secondary School in Rawatbhata, which was 30 km away from my village Mohna. I completed the first year of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) from Government College, Rampura, with first rank in the Vikram University, Ujjain, MP. I had to live in a rented accommodation, surviving on whatever I could cook myself. I was motivated by reading inspiring stories of doctors and famous personalities (from other fields) that overcame all obstacles and succeeded against all odds. During this challenging time, my prayer (Tamsoma Jyortigamay : meaning from darkness to light) as well as powerful stories inspired me and gave rays (light) of hope to overcome the difficult (dark) phase of my life.

### How I was Inspired to Become an Eye Surgeon?

I was inspired by my grandfather (Late Dr. Kamta Prasad Pandey) to become an eye surgeon. My grandfather was a freedom fighter, who had migrated from Ballia (UP) to Rajasthan in 1943 after the 'Rebel Ballia (Bagi Ballia) Movement'. Before that, he had learned basic eye treatment and the art of cataract surgery from Dr. P.D. Giridhar at Kishan Lal Jalan Eye Hospital, Bhiwani, (Haryana) in 1937. Cataract Surgery was not very advanced in my childhood days and patients needed thick (aphakic) glasses. Still, the visually-impaired patients used to express gratitude to my grandfather for curing their eye problems. So, I had my eyes set on becoming a doctor and, specifically, an ophthalmologist. I was always fascinated by a doctor's ability to make a difference in patients' lives through medical or surgical treatment.



Freedom-fighter and renowned eye surgeon Dr. Kamta Prasad Pandey (grandfather of Dr. Suresh K. Pandey) with Dr. P.D.Giridhar (chief eye surgeon) and other eye surgeons at Kishan Lal Jalan Eye Hospital, Bhiwani (Haryana, India), 1937.

### Medical College Chronicles: How I Overcame Challenges During the MBBS?

Despite all odds, I prepared for the MBBS entrance exam (Pre-Medical Test) with borrowed books, visits to the library, reading inspirational life-stories to keep myself motivated. I managed to get selected in the MBBS course at the Netaji Subhash Chandra Medical College at Jabalpur, MP, in the first attempt (at the age of 17) and that too without the help of any coaching institute. I had learned from the beginning: "Success does not come and find you; you have to go out and get it."

Studying MBBS was not easy for me as the medium of education was English and I had studied in Hindi-medium schools. I stayed at my hostel, and hostel life contributed enormously to convert me from an introvert, shy individual to an extrovert person. The maximum interaction I had with my classmates and seniors was during group discussions on various medical topics that helped me in understanding complex areas and clarified my confusions and doubts.

Fortunately, I met helpful and supportive seniors (and teachers) who helped me in understanding English and medical terms during the first few months of the MBBS course. They even lent me notes and books to help me study. The process of adjusting in a completely different environment, understanding a new language, and going through financial stress was hard to say the least. I faced the toughest time of my life during the MBBS course. With

only Rs/-600-800 sent by my parents every month, I had to stretch every rupee. Sometimes, I had to survive on just one meal each day. Surviving on a shoestring budget was not easy. I even cooked myself just to save money.

All these problems and financial difficulties were not bigger than my dreams, and I never let them bother or distract me from my main goal. I was a step closer to becoming a doctor and I focused whatever energy I had on that one goal. Studies were a way for me to keep myself distracted from my worries. I stayed away from partying and students who wasted time having endless fun. I had no option other than focusing all my money, effort, and energy on my studies if I really wanted to turn my dream of being an ophthalmologist into a reality.

### Medical Training in Three Continents: India, USA, and Australia

I successfully passed MBBS with first division with 7th rank in the class of 140 students. With the help of my seniors and sheer will-power, I secured a very good rank in the state pre-post graduate (Pre-PG) examination and also selected in PG entrance examination of PGIMER, Chandigarh. I pursued my Post-Graduation in Ophthalmology from the prestigious Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh. After completing PG in ophthalmology in December 1997, I was selected for advanced training in USA where I worked as a Fellow and later as an Instructor at the John A. Moran Eye Center, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA and Sydney Eye Hospital, Save Sight Institute, Sydney, Australia for five and two years respectively.

### My Journey to Medical Entrepreneurship in India

My wife (Dr. Vidushi Sharma, MD, FRCS, UK) and I then returned to India in January 2006, and with our insignificant savings, we started the SuVi Eye Hospital and Lasik Laser Center in Kota on February 5, 2006. Word about our good work spread quickly and within three years, the hospital expanded remarkably. We started our clinical practice seeing 8 to 10 patients per day. Now, we see approximately 250 patients every day and perform 8 to 10 laser, major or minor eye surgeries per day. So far, I have done more than 90,000 successful cataract surgeries with a very high success rate and about 2000 eye surgeries free of cost for the needy patients.

SuVi Eye Hospital and Lasik Laser Center, Kota has world-class eye surgery facilities, including Rajasthan's first DORC Eva Phaco-vitreotomy machine for vitreo-retinal surgery, Zepto-nano pulse technology for refractive cataract

### Awards and Recognition

I was felicitated with the 'Achievement Award' by the American Academy of Ophthalmology. I was awarded the 'Gold Medal' by the Indian Intraocular Implant and Refractive Surgery Society twice. I was invited to perform 'Live Surgery' at the international meeting at Milan, Italy, as well as at several Indian cities such as New Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Chennai, Vishakhapatnam, etc. I was also awarded for the Best Surgical Videos by the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery, USA. Dr. Vidushi and I were honored by the National President of IMA for Outstanding Community Service Awards and Government of Rajasthan awarded us for our outstanding work in the field of ophthalmic teaching and the elimination of preventable blindness. More than 25 eye surgeons from India and overseas (USA, UK, Middle East and Europe) have visited our facility at Kota (Rajasthan) to witness our cutting-edge work in the field of ophthalmology.



Dr. Suresh K Pandey & Dr. Vidushi Sharma Established SuVi Eye Institute and Lasik Laser Center in Kota in Feb. 2006

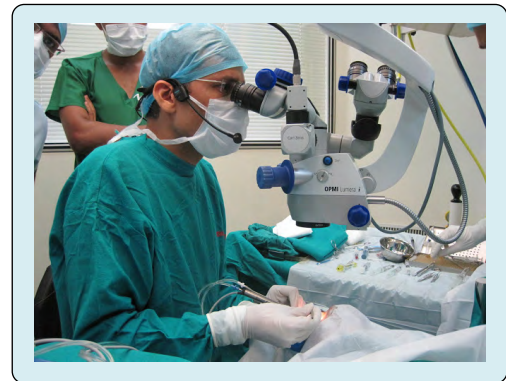
### Gift of Sight

Ophthalmology was always my most preferred branch as this offers the adrenalin rush associated with performing delicate sight restoring surgeries. During my 26-year career as an eye surgeon (1995 to 2021), I have performed more than 90,000 successful eye surgeries and about 2,000 of them were done free of cost to needy patients.

### My Mentors who Shaped My Medical Career

I had the good fortune to come across many inspiring teachers and mentors who inspired me to become a successful doctor. I am grateful to my mentors, Prof. Jagat Ram, Prof. Amod Gupta, Prof. Mangat Dogra, Late Dr. J.S. Saini, Dr. Ashok Sharma, Dr. S.S. Pandav, Dr. Kanwar Mohan, Dr. A.K. Jain, Dr. Usha Singh, Dr. Mrinal Anand and Dr. Neeraj Sood at PGIMER, Chandigarh, Prof. David J. Apple in USA, Dr. Anthony J. Maloof, and Dr. E. John Milverton in Australia, who were instrumental in shaping and refining the surgeon in me as they taught me the art of eye microsurgery using both the right and the left hand.

I am also thankful to my friends Dr. Somesh Gupta, Dr. Man Singh Chandel. I also get inspiration from books written by Shriram Sharma Acharya of Gayatri Pariwar. My passion is to motivate young students to become better citizens of India and to excel in their field.



Dr. Suresh K. Pandey performing Live Surgery during the Delhi Ophthalmology Society Conference.

### Secrets to Become a Successful Doctor

My city (Kota) is famous for coaching classes and ever year thousands of medical aspirants come to Kota (Rajasthan) for medical (NEET) Coaching. I have written a book "Secrets of successful Doctors: A Complete Guide to a Fulfilling Medical Career" to inspire medical aspirants, medical students and young doctors. My suggestion for medical students and residents: complete your medical studies and specialization training at the right age, before you plunge into family responsibilities, and get the requisite qualifications, training and exposure. You should not compromise on the medical training and get the best possible training that you can get and empower yourself. It depends on you how much knowledge you can gather from your teachers or mentors. If you are receptive, obedient, hard-working and eager to learn, there is no end to how much you can learn from them. Always keep patient welfare topmost in mind, even if you are

### My Message to Medical Students and Young Doctors

in private medical practice. Follow an ethical practice, learn how to deal with patients and cultivate good communication skills. Always try to be approachable and accessible to your patients. Setbacks are bound to come in life so be determined and thick-skinned. In the end, the one who succeeds is the one who does not allow setbacks to affect him. As Sir Wiston Churchill famously said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal."

#### How to Strengthen Doctor-Patient Trust?

In recent years, the doctor-patient relationship has come under a lot of strain all over the world. Part of it is due to a generalized socio-cultural change, with more consumerism, increasing expectations and an inability to accept adverse outcomes of course, there are many problems and potential solutions related to the way we deal with patients, but a major problem is that of "trust". The trust between a doctor and a patient is sacred and should remain so. Many senior doctors in the past enjoyed almost complete faith and trust of all their patients. While it may be difficult to maintain that kind of trust in today's changed society with big faceless hospitals and increasingly expensive healthcare, yet all of us, both doctors and patients should do the best we can to keep this trust, as it is vital to the success of any medical intervention. The doctor-patient trust can be strengthened by following 5Cs: Care, Compassion, Competence, Communication and Cost.

Medicine is a complex subject and patient's response to treatment/surgical procedure may vary due to many factors. In these times of increasing expectations and eroding doctor-patient trust, sometimes we as doctors tend to feel frustrated for being doubted, for our intentions being needlessly questioned, and for patients being constantly suspicious and argumentative. Sometimes when matters go too far, they end up in courtrooms or in worse cases end up in violence against doctors. However, the patients need to realize that for one incident that they hear of some wrong being done by doctors, there are thousands of honest doctors tirelessly treating countless patients and making their lives better.

I would like young doctors to know that medical profession gives a lot of satisfaction, and there are thousands of grateful patients who make this whole journey worthwhile. This is one profession where we derive satisfaction not just through financial rewards or due to a job well done, but also from the knowledge of making a lasting difference in another person's life. As Hellen Keller said- The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched they must be felt with the heart. We feel extremely fortunate to firstly be doctors and secondly be ophthalmologists, who can make a difference in the life of so many people.

