**“Professional GPS for young medical professionals to select the appropriate career path”**

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Medical profession has always had the highest craze and fan following among general public as well as the young academic aspirants. This remains true even today when medical profession has come under scanner for all wrong reasons and is being humiliated and accused of negligence, professional misconduct and patient looting. And while much of this degradation has been consequential to the misdeeds of some rotten apples in our basket, scare mongering by some irresponsible & ignorant media and politicians is also a major miscreant. Add to it the unduly long years that a medical professional has to invest in accumulating the adequate experience and skills to serve the patients properly, medicine is now surely seeming nothing less than being sent into a gruelling self -exile for these better deserving young meritorious brains.

Having made it through this arduous hurdle race, most people would have exhausted their will and wish to pursue any further academic training. However there are always some overzealous freaks who haven’t still had it enough and thus begins their even more chaotic pursuit of penance called super specialisation. These are the ones who truly believe in the ‘never- say- die spirit ‘and are the true followers of ‘C.M.E’ (continuous medical education). For them their super specialty study, life (most would be fast approaching middle age by then), and education of their kids (in most cases) goes side by side. The future course for these super ambitious souls could be one of these; successful culmination in to meaningful practice (40%), further pursuit of further study and micro specialisation (including moving abroad) ( 30%) and a rather late self-realisation that ‘this course was not meant for me’ and then taking an entirely different route and then further wandering (the superbrillant 30%) (By personal communication and survey). By this time, most of them are already encountering their midlife crisis and are on the verge of planning their ‘to-do-list’ once they retire.

Professional life especially for doctors has become extremely stressful and unpredictable of late. Several intrinsic and extrinsic determinants for selecting the correct career choice need to be considered. These could include personal liking, individual temperament, aptitude for a specific course and stamina to sustain the motivation to carry on among the intrinsic factors, while future available opportunities, competition, redundancy, family responsibilities and financial soundness would comprise some of the extrinsic challenges to be considered.

In today’s times when time is precious, we resort to GPS navigator to help us find out the best route to reach our final destination. The GPS navigator through its computerised brain tracks the congested spots and bottlenecking and thus suggests some alternative hassle- free routes to expedite our journey.

Similarly in our medical profession we now need to be smarter and make use of a similar ‘professional journey mapping system’ (JMS) to help us fish out the best career choices to select and thereby avoid the undue misery and dejection from incorrect and overzealous decisions.

Having barely survived through this same process, I could now possibly think of an objective scoring tool which we may call “**Professional Informed Choice” (PIC) Score** **(Table 1)** which the young medical professionals could use or redesign as per their needs to make wise career decisions. Each column needs carefully thinking and deliberation either alone or with your well-wishers with a sound and well rested mind and then scored (1= ‘least’ chance, 2= ‘may be’ considered, 3= ‘best’ chance)

**Table 1**: Hypothetical case example of a young budding postgraduate student considering a particular specialty of interest and evaluating the various determinants as mentioned in separate columns on a scale of 1-3 to arrive at a final score. Multiple courses could be considered and compared according to the score to provide you the top 2 career options.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Specialty/ Subspecialty course under consideration  e.g.  Pediatric Nephrology, Neurology, Rheumatology, Endocrinology,  Hematooncology,  Gastroenterology, etc | Personal aptitude/ liking for the course  ( One needs to understand whether it is his/her ‘real interest’ and whether one is ‘cut out for it’ considering your skills and skills required for the job OR is it a ‘borrowed interest’ from an impressive senior/ mentor) | Need in market and degree of saturation | Available training and settling opportunities- within country and abroad | Early or late settlement (number of years expected ) and chances of ‘burn out’ | Personal, family time and time for personal hobbies and interests | Financial viability  ( include need for setting up equipment and office) | Collateral benefits from selecting this course ( e.g. being able to make a difference in life of others by serving others/influencing them to act/ achieving rare fame/ travel opportunities | Final score  (out of 21 on a scale of 1-3 for each individ ual paramet  er) |
| Option 1:  Pediatric Nephrology | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 20 |
| Option 2:  General Pediatrics | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 13 |

The course which you like and at the same time scores well on PIC score would be the reasonably best bet, while the course which you like but scores poorly on the PIC score would need some careful reconsideration.

We thus propose this objective tool to help our fellow colleagues who have embarked on this adventure called ‘Life as a medical professional’. This would enable them to take charge of their life and happiness rather than leaving the professional contentment to serendipity.

Limitations: Just as no system is fool proof, this tool may also suffer from problems of personal bias, poor judgement and lack of imagination and long term vision. Seeking guidance of a seasoned expert, senior or your life partner is recommended before taking a final decision to avoid later regret from personal short sightedness. Long term cohort studies would be needed to ascertain the accuracy of this objective tool.

**Life is after all a unique and one time gift for most of us, so use it well and live to the fullest!**