Thomas Abraham’s first GP partnership post was in what was Europe’s largest council estate at the time—Bransholme in Hull. “It was a real test of a GP because of all the socioeconomic problems, such as a high rate of teen pregnancy, alcoholism, and drug misuse,” he says. “It was challenging but also a great experience.”

During more than two decades in general practice Abraham has worked as a GP partner, a singlehanded principal in a rural practice, in the armed forces, and currently as a locum. He also inspired his daughter, Rowena, to enter general practice.

“The beauty of general practice is that you are the first point of contact. Not only are you a physician but also you are an interpreter of illness, a counsellor, and a pastor,” he says.

Abraham was born in India and trained as a surgeon there. One of his proudest moments came after a woman was brought into the teaching hospital he was working in. “She had been knocked over by a car and was dying of internal bleeding,” he says. “There was no matching blood in the blood bank for her. So I donated my own blood and operated on her and she survived by God’s grace. That is something that made me feel great to be a doctor.”

In 1983 Abraham came to the UK and worked in a surgical specialty in Wales before entering GP training in Hull. An enthusiastic communicator, Abraham has written more than 150 articles for the medical, local, and national press.

He experienced personal tragedy in 2001 when his eldest daughter died. While he was still grieving he was referred to the GMC by two fellow Indian doctors who said he was not fit to practise. He was exonerated but the ordeal was stressful. “It was a nightmare scenario,” he says. But the experience did give him a strong interest in GMC procedures and he has since written a number of articles on medico-legal matters. “I have no hesitation in challenging authority with passion backed up with facts,” Abraham says.

Aside from writing, cricket is his passion. He is an official of the England and Wales Cricket Board and a league umpire in Yorkshire. When India were touring last summer, he noticed that the Trent Bridge ground was planning to charge £10 for the last day of the five day test—the final day is often free. At the time there had been devastating floods in his home state of Kerala and all the Indian players were wearing black armbands.

Abraham says proudly, “I managed to convince the authorities to waive the charges and contribute significantly to the flood relief effort.”

Jacqui Wise, The BMJ
Cite this as: BMJ 2019;364:l1080

**Nominate a role model**

To nominate someone who has been a role model during your medical career, send their name, their job title, and the reason for your nomination to arimmer@bmj.com

**Nominated by Guy Clayton**

Thomas is articulate, brave, and prepared to challenge authority. His articles are eloquent, passionate, and often challenge conventional thinking in medicine.

He has chaired educational meetings, taught medical students, and provided support and inspiration for colleagues, particularly those facing criticism or burnout.

He is courteous and clever, yet always respectful of staff and patients, whom he treats as his equals. He examines patients with care and respect.

Thomas has suffered some significant personal tragedies in his life, and yet he has managed to retain his dignity, values, and sense of humour.

Above all, Thomas is kind. His patients are very loyal, and often come up to him in the street and shake his hand, even many years after he has cared for them.

I am proud to call Thomas my friend, mentor, and role model as a GP.

Guy Clayton is a GP at Molescroft Surgery in Beverley, Yorkshire, and a GP occupational health adviser.
What was your earliest ambition?
To be a doctor and to marry a farmer. I did both.

What was your best career move?
Not getting the *Lancet* editorship in 1995. It meant having 10 additional vital years of apprenticeship at *The BMJ* and elsewhere—as well as meeting my husband at a party that I might otherwise not have gone to.

What was the worst mistake in your career?
We chose to live in the country, which was lovely, but it meant a long commute when the kids were young.

Which living doctor do you most admire, and why?
I've met very few doctors I don't admire.

Do doctors get paid enough?
Yes, but the things that made being a doctor fun and sustainable are being stripped away—working in a team, the firm structure, on-call rooms, the doctors' mess, well organised rotas. And that's unforgivable.

What single change would you like to see made to the NHS?
Independence from government interference.

How is your work-life balance?
Life and work are completely intertwined, and I like that. There's hardly a moment when I'm not thinking about the journal in some form or another, and the job involves quite a lot of travel. But if it's a choice between work or family, I've got better at making the right call.

What single change has made the most difference in your field?
The willingness to tackle conflicts of interest. I believe that we'll get to a stage when the idea that manufacturers evaluate their own products and own that information will seem utterly strange and wrong. So too will the idea that doctors, researchers, patient groups, and guideline panellists take money from industry.

To whom would you most like to apologise?
Future generations, if we don't get our act together on climate change.

How do you keep fit and healthy?
In my dreams I row and swim and climb mountains. In reality I cycle to work and walk the dogs. I also meditate every morning.

What new technology or development are you most looking forward to?
Completely carbonless transport.

Where or when are you happiest?
At work, editing something into shape or chairing a lively meeting. At home or in our hut in Dorset, playing chess with my daughter.

What book should every doctor read?
It doesn't matter, as long as they're reading books.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?
Going back to bed after getting up to let the dogs out.

Is the thought of retirement a dream or a nightmare?
A dream, but one that I'm happy to wait a while for.

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2019;364:l1275