



CAREERS

Role model: Thomas Abraham

The Hull GP talks to **Jacqui Wise** about his love of general practice, creative writing, and cricket

Jacqui Wise

The BMJ

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 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 General Medical Council by two fellow Indian doctors who said he was not fit to practise. The GMC exonerated him 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 a cricket official of the England and Wales Cricket Board and a league cricket 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."

Nominated by Guy Clayton

Thomas is articulate, brave, and prepared to challenge authority, particularly when he feels there has been an injustice. His published articles are eloquent, passionate, and often involve respectful challenge of conventional thinking in medicine.

He has chaired educational meetings, taught medical students, and provided an enormous amount of 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. He listens when they talk to him and is genuinely interested in helping them. He has always brought a smile of pleasure, and sometimes relief, whenever I see him.

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 like him. They 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 or one of their loved ones. 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

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

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