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Film making and nuclear medicine: Manish Pandit

Consultant Manish Pandit talks to **Helen Jones** about how he switched from surgery to nuclear medicine and accidentally became a filmmaker along the way

Helen Jones

"I grew up in India and my father was a homeopath in his spare time. Now that I know about homeopathy I'm more sceptical but as a child I saw that he helped people, he didn't take money for it, and people felt better," says Manish Pandit, a consultant in nuclear medicine at Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust.

"I wanted to make people feel better too, and that was the spark for me becoming a doctor."

After training in Pune, India, Pandit came to the UK and became a surgeon, but after a time he found his passion waning. "I gradually started to lose interest in surgery," Pandit says. "The work-life balance was different in those days—I had to be there all the time. My interest in investigative medicine was growing, and I had the idea that a lot of medicine in the future would be driven by the things happening in nuclear medicine."

It's a specialty that he would recommend to medical students. "It involves lots of thinking and there is a lot of patient contact," Pandit says. "There's the fusion of physiology and anatomy; by using single photo emission computed tomography you're able to see physiology in action with a tracer that shows how blood flows and can help diagnose coronary artery disease and tumours, for example."

There is also no typical day. "There's an element of unpredictability in nuclear medicine, which I like," Pandit says. "After the first decade or two in the specialty, the unpredictability forces you to marvel at how many things you can still learn because the human body is so different in the way it reacts."

Nuclear medicine will play a huge role in medicine in the future, he believes. "There will be a huge demand for nuclear medicine physicians—not many people know about it as a specialty and a lot of people in it are coming up to retirement, so there will be lots of opportunities."

As well as his career in nuclear medicine, Pandit is a filmmaker who has made almost 40 films covering everything from NHS training to politics and religion. He has directed and edited seven grand rounds for Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust, ensuring that staff who don't have time to attend because of other commitments are able to get continuing professional development points and watch at a time that suits them. He has also directed a film on lung cancer which was distributed to GP practices and cancer directorates, and filmed the British Nuclear Medicine Society's annual lectures, as well as a celebration of the 70th anniversary of the NHS.

He got into film making by accident. "I never wanted to be a film maker and had never held a camera in my life, but I got into a stupid argument with another doctor over whether the Mahabharata war (described in the epic Hindi poem) ever happened and if the god Krishna existed as a historical person," he explains. "I realised there was a lot of scientific research and astronomy behind it, so I thought I'd make a film about it. The camera man deserted me the night before the shoot so I decided to shoot it myself. Luckily, it turned out okay and the film got over 3 million views in 30 countries. It was quite a well known film at the time."

Despite the success of his films, Pandit says that nuclear medicine is his main focus. "At the end of the day, as doctors we are here to serve and to make a difference to people's lives. The satisfaction I get from doing that is worth far more than anything else," he says.

Nominated by Atul Khanna

"I first met Manish Pandit in 2011 and feel that I have been privileged in having the association of a colleague who is both selfless and the most exemplary volunteer that I have ever known."

"I've met many of the students he has taught and he is unique in the pastoral care he provides to them. He has also provided help and guidance to many colleagues and is the training programme director for nuclear medicine."

"He is also a film producer and director, providing information on trust activities to help public health. If the work had been commissioned from an outside provider, it would have cost the NHS a significant amount. The goodwill created by his work is priceless and he is currently volunteering to make a complete repository of films on imaging and nuclear medicine."

Atul Khanna is a consultant plastic, reconstructive, and hand surgeon at Sandwell General Hospital

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.