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Managing risk: GP Pipin Singh

Pipin Singh talks to **Helen Jones** about why he loves the variety of general practice and enjoys learning from the GPs he trains

Helen Jones

"It may sound like a cliché, but my mum has always been my role model," says Pipin Singh. "She was a GP and as a kid I spent a lot of time in her practice, sitting in reception waiting for her to finish work. I got to know a lot of her patients because she was a very old school GP who knew her patients like the back of her hand. I found that fascinating."

That fascination led Singh to a career in medicine. "I wanted to combine my love of science with wanting to know more about people's lives," he says.

Singh is now a GP partner and trainer at the Village Green Surgery in Wallsend, Tyne and Wear. Being a GP has enabled him to become involved in running a business and in setting up local services.

A typical day includes direct contact with 30 to 40 patients either face to face, or by phone, video, or e-consultation, as well as dealing with between 50 and 100 repeat prescriptions and between 30 and 40 blood results, x rays, and computed tomography reports.

In addition, Singh runs a weekly diabetes clinic and does a weekly care home ward round to see 20 to 30 residents. He also teaches GP registrars and other trainee healthcare professionals such as nurses and pharmacists.

He says that by teaching he also learns from his GP trainees. "I discover a lot from them, especially if they've come from a hospital placement. Things have moved on since I did it and I find out how services are working—it helps keep me up to date."

Singh says that he would advise any medical student to consider a career as a GP. "It's an amazing job. It's challenging but you get to know people and their behaviours well," he says.

"You also become very good at risk management. I don't have access to people's scans or blood results at the drop of a hat, or their electrocardiogram results in ten minutes. You become good at working out what is serious and what is not serious in a relatively short space of time. It's about pattern recognition. I make a lot of decisions daily without support. The rewarding thing is that you become a very decisive person."

He says that there are some negative aspects to the job—including long hours and a great deal of pressure, especially during the covid-19 pandemic—but those are far outweighed by the benefits. "You can get a good work-life balance once you've qualified. You don't have the on-call commitments of a hospital doctor, although if you choose to do out of hours work you can, or if you want more flexibility you can become a locum."

Singh says he's managed to achieve the right balance between work and home life and finds time to do fitness training and running, and to play tennis, chess, and snooker to unwind. He adds that the benefit of being a GP is that it also opens up a range of career possibilities. "You don't have to just stick to seeing patients and doing routine surgeries. You can have a portfolio career and there are a whole host of opportunities available to you. I have an interest in diabetes and men's sexual health, and I run clinics for those. And, as well as my clinical training role, I write for *GP Online*, *Pulse*, and the *Monthly Index of Medical Specialities*—which is a different aspect of medicine and something I really enjoy."

Nominated by Marc Pentel

"Pipin Singh is an excellent trainer—he's flexible and dynamic and he pitched my training at just the right level. He also prepared me extensively for life as a GP, so the transition was smooth and easy for me.

"In addition to his work as a trainer, he's also proactive in terms of altering practice systems and ways of working, along with his practice team, to create a more streamlined, efficient, and safe environment to work in. During my time at the Village Green Surgery, Wallsend, I was impressed with the dynamism of the team under his leadership and even during my short spell there I could see great leaps in terms of efficient ways of work that have patient safety at their core.

"Finally, and slightly less related to work ethic and teaching style, his sense of fashion is second to none. He owns (and wears) the most fantastic range of shirts and trouser combinations. I was very impressed, on a daily basis, with his choices of attire."

Marc Pentel is a GP in Newcastle Upon Tyne