

Reflection

Chasing Contentment

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Introduction

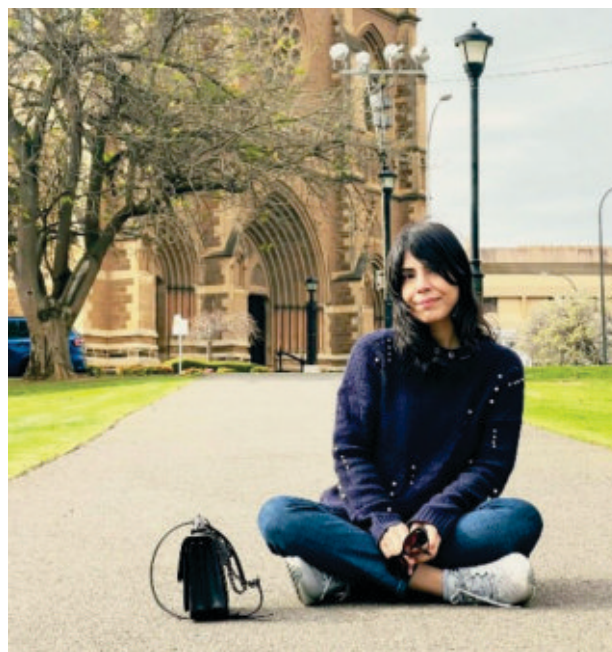
What does “satisfaction” mean in the world of medicine?

I wonder as I put back the latest edition of CMDT on the bookshelf. It has been my companion for years. It has been with me through the highs and lows of life. It constantly upgrades and is there for me whenever I need it. It has all the qualities of a perfect partner. It weighs no less than a newborn baby. And since I own every edition from the past decade, my bookshelf now looks like a newborn nursery.

I step back and look at the marvel of all the books. New and old. Thick and thin (Well, mostly thick). With each sentence underlined, I have built myself, word by word. I ended up with thick glasses and thin hair, to match the books on my shelf, but there is something missing. The shelves may be full. Designations earned, accounts balanced, papers published, yet some mornings I wake with a hollow in my chest and wonder, “Is this it?” I must insert a disclaimer here that these are personal thoughts penned down by a seasoned physician (myself) with 12 letters under her name. These do not necessarily need to match others’ opinions, who may have found what I am still looking for.

And I am not talking about gratefulness. My soul bows quietly to the universe every day to express my gratitude. I am talking about that sense of ultimate calm that whispers my life’s cup is filled to the brim. To me, satisfaction is rare. It is rarer than a functioning printer in my ward office. Although I may not have achieved professional satisfaction to the fullest, I carry its vision with me. It must taste like the first bite of freshly baked bread. It must bloom like the smile that lingers after a favourite memory. It must feel like reaching a mountain’s peak, looking at the climb behind, the view in front, and being able to finally breathe. It must be warm, alive, and complete. I am sure it exists. I am confident it is around. But when will I find it?

I have spent years of my life running through the hospital corridors. I don’t trust the elevator, so I always take the stairs for some extra cardio. Not to forget the emotional



load I carry that contributes to (mental) strength training. All this workout and satisfaction is still nowhere to be seen. I am on autopilot. I show up, I work, I leave, and the cycle repeats itself. I don’t pause to ask myself why. Maybe because I’m afraid I won’t like the answer.

There was a time I thought satisfaction would arrive when I graduated, but no one told me it wouldn’t come automatically with the white coat. Then I was sure it would come once I finished the training. Then with the degree. Then with the promotion. Then with the publication. Then with another degree. But it didn’t. At least, not sustainably. Instead, it came in waves. The time when a patient looked at me with honest trust, or a student who appreciated me, or an unexpected holiday that popped up as a notification, or a rare event when my ward printer finally worked. And it’s in these fleeting, unplanned, human moments where satisfaction hides. Satisfaction is not one single thing. It’s a patchwork we keep building piece by piece. We gather moments and stitch them together. It is never complete, and it is okay to have a few frayed ends.

It is alright to not be satisfied sometimes. Some days will nourish your soul. Other days are just paid. And

that doesn't make you any less of a healer. Satisfaction is not a milestone you add to your resume. It is not a degree you hang on your walls or a cluster of letters after your name. It is a practice to pause, grow, and reflect. To upgrade and be there for people who need

you, just like the CMDT on your shelf. If you are still kind, still real, still dreaming, then you are doing something right. Because in a world that often forgets we are human, still "feeling" might be the most satisfying thing of all.