



Obituary

Dr. Nishant Chhajer (22/12/1977 - 10/1/2024)Neha Chauhan¹ ¹ Fortis Hospital, Richmond Road, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Indian J Plast Surg

Early Days

Dr. Nishant Chhajer was born into a humble family to a homemaker Mrs Pushpa Chhajer and businessman Mr (Lt.) Anoop Chand Chhajer on 22/12/1977 in Bikaner, Rajasthan. He was the eldest of three sons. By virtue of his being born into a marwari family, the traditional profession of business was easily available to him; however his childhood dream and his mother's deep desire to see him serve the society as a doctor made him pursue medicine. He was the first doctor in his family and community. He completed his schooling till High School from Saraswati Shishu Mandir, Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh in 1992 and his Higher Secondary school from Sanvale Singh Kisan Inter College, Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh in 1994.

The Plastic Surgeon in Making

After completing schooling, he joined the Bachelor of Science course at Government Dungar College, Maharaja Ganga Singh University, Bikaner, Rajasthan from 1994 to 1997. After that with his single minded determination, Dr Nishant Chhajer cleared the Uttar Pradesh pre-medical test with flying colours and enrolled at the prestigious King George's Medical University in 1999 for the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (M.B.B.S.) course. He completed his medical graduation with honours in Pathology, General Surgery and Obstetrics and Gynaecology in 2004. He completed his internship in 2005. According to his MBBS batch mate and close friend, Dr Faraz Ahmad, Associate Professor, Department of Surgery, King George Medical College, Lucknow, "Nishant was a jolly, kind, hard working and a bright student. He never indulged in any fights/arguments with anyone and was available to extend a helping hand to anyone in need. He was good at sports like badminton and extracurricular activities like dance, skits, and drama. He was social, friendly, and loved travelling. He was a regular at the AIIMS annual fest of "PULSE" where he represented his college and won several awards for it. It is difficult for any of us to accept

that he would no longer be around us. Nishant was felicitated by his alma mater for his notable contribution to the awards tally of King George's medical College from PULSE.

Dr. Nishant then went on to do his post graduation in General Surgery from Lala Lajpat Rai Memorial Medical College, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh and was awarded the Master of Surgery degree in year 2009. His training with his MS(General Surgery) guide, Dr V S Singh under whom he did his MS thesis entitled "Clinical study of cleft lip and cleft palate" left a deep positive impact on him making him pursue Plastic Surgery as his super specialization at a later date.

I had the opportunity to work with him first as a non MCh (Magister Chirurgiae) senior resident (2009-2010) and then as a MCh batch mate (2010-2013) at the Department of Burns, Plastic and Maxillofacial Surgery, Vardhaman Mahavir Medical College and Safdarjung hospital, New Delhi.

I clearly remember the day when I, freshly passed out of General Surgery residency, was appearing for the interview of senior resident(non MCh) at the administrative office of Safdarjung hospital in 2009. There were almost 15-20 candidates lined up for interview. While all of us were stressed out about the uncertainty that future held in store for us; in the corner stood a young, confident and self assured aspirant who looked relaxed and unbothered by the outcomes of the interview. When the results of the interview were announced and we joined the department as senior residents in September 2009, I noticed that one amongst us, was that poised and relaxed resident, I had seen at the time of interview. His name was Dr Nishant Chhajer. He was cool in the sense that he had the virtue to stay calm and composed in any high pressure situation, befitting his aspiration to be a Plastic Surgeon. Bold, efficient, hard working, humble, kind, every ready to help, always wearing a smile on his face and wit and humour on his sleeves - that was the Dr. Nishant I got to know of during my senior residency at Safdarjung Hospital. As all of us were simultaneously preparing for the plastic surgery residency entrance exams we would almost everyday be discussing the books and notes to read, answers to old

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Fig. 1 Dr Nishant Chhajer (22/12/1977 - 10/1/2024).

questionnaires and engaging in case discussions. Dr Nishant was intelligent with a razor sharp memory, quest for knowledge and also the ability to freely share knowledge.

A year later, in 2010, we got into the Plastic Surgery residency at Safdarjung hospital, New Delhi and spent next three years working closely with each other. Dr Nishant had the ability to treat everyone equally from the lowest rung in the hierarchy to the highest. He was a person who would be quick to notice and acknowledge good work of every single person from sweeper to peon to the nurses to juniors residents and colleagues. Another of his quality that I personally admired was the ability to call a spade a spade. I never saw him sugarcoat his words for personal gains. He had an enviable energy and zest for work. It almost always amazed



Fig. 2 Dr Nishant Chhajer with his wife, Mrs Sarita Jain and children Khamish (son) and Ginisha (daughter).

me to see how despite hectic night duties with multiple emergency surgeries, he would be carrying on with the next day's work with same smile, energy and humour; as if he had rested all night. He never ever complained about anything. He knew how to change things he didn't like and accept things he couldn't change. He was a reliable resident who gave good surgical outcomes. He was respectful towards teachers but still had the unique quality to be able to disagree with their proposed planning and propose his own out of the box plans backed with logic and data. This quality of being fearless and respectful at the same time, a rare to find was appreciated equally by teachers and colleagues.

As a colleague, he was dependable and was always the one who was first approached by anyone in need and he would never disappoint anyone. His thesis was about leg defects' reconstruction and by virtue of that he had done a good number of reverse sural flaps much before I had got my first chance. I remember one of my emergency days when a heel defect had come for which I wanted to do the reverse sural flap and he happily agreed to stay back to assist me even though his duty was over when I told him that I was doing it for the first time and would appreciate his guidance. Since I was on emergency duty that day, by the time I finished evening ward rounds and came to the operation theatre to post the case, it was already 8pm. Despite that he still waited patiently with a smile and taught me all the tricks he had learnt about the flap. He treated juniors equally well and it would not be wrong to say that he was their favourite senior from our batch of ten.

He actively worked behind the scenes in the organisation of NABICON 2012 and 50th alumni meet of Department of Plastic Surgery, Safdarjung hospital; SafPlastCon in 2013. He was never an attention seeker and would happily carry out his designated duties without seeking any recognition for them. In 2013, we all passed our Plastic Surgery residency program and moved to our respective chosen cities of work. I moved to Bangalore and he moved to Noida to start practice but we stayed in touch. He worked at Gunjan Clinic, Yatharth Super Speciality Hospital, Asclepius Hospital; Noida and would also operate at Moradabad and Varanasi (→**Fig. 1**). I shared a great rapport with him both during residency and later whenever I visited my parents in Ghaziabad, Noida being a neighbouring city. After the mini reunions of our batch, whenever I was in Delhi, Dr Nishant like a perfect friend and a gentleman would drop me at my parents home before heading off to his home in Noida.

The Man Who Valued Relationships

On 9 February 2011, he married Sarita Jain and is blessed with two beautiful children with her (→**Fig. 2**). He was a family man and prioritised family over every other thing. He chose to be in Noida instead of the more glamorous and higher paying Delhi, just "to be with his parents" and extended family. He was a loving son, a doting brother, a loving husband and a responsible father. He wife shared how he would lovingly stitch back any of the buttons that would have come off his children's uniform (and jokingly tell her

that he would do it better than her as he was a plastic surgeon!), get them ready for school and be an equal parent. He was a silent philanthropist who believed in the old saying, “even the left hand should not know what the right hand gave away.” He whole heartedly contributed to education of orphans and underprivileged girls; gave free medicines and food besides operating upon the needy, free of cost. He despised show off of his social work so much so that even his family used to come to know of them from others. His wife recalls an incident where a nursing staff came to their home to give them sweets after passing her exams. It was only when the nurse told that Dr Nishant had paid fees for her course as she couldn't afford it, that the family came to know of the help he extended to others.

His juniors vouch for him as a man with the “golden heart” who was always available to them, both professionally and personally. Contrary to the cut throat competitive world around, Dr Nishant believed in collaboration and uplifting others. Dr Sameer Prabhakar, Senior Plastic Surgeon at Kailash Hospital, Greater Noida shared that he owes his career in Noida to Dr Nishant Chhajer who whole-heartedly helped him make a foothold in the city when was relocating from Kurukshetra to Noida.

The Star in Making Who Left the World a Little Too Soon

Dr Nishant was a visionary. During Covid-19 pandemic when he lost his uncle, rather than grieving, he came forward and established a medical centre with an in house oxygen plant, to help the people of the community. He would never hesitate to take up a challenging or complicated cases and that reflected in his life approach as well. His confidence and excellent problem-solving approach over years made him “the go to referral plastic surgeon” for complicated cases in Noida and neighboring cities. In the decade of his service as a

plastic surgeon, he had operated upon more than 5,000 plastic surgical cases covering almost all spectrum of the super speciality, including cosmetic surgery, hair restoration, maxillofacial injuries, trauma reconstruction surgery, hand surgery, cleft lip and palate, cancer reconstructions and burns. A dedicated team leader, he took his juniors and para medical staff along. His dedication towards his patients reflects in the fact that even after a long day after operating upon multiple patients; he would always make post-operative rounds even if he had finished his surgeries close to midnight. Night before the fateful day, when he met with the fatal car accident, he had operated upon a road traffic accident case with crush injury hand.

On the morning of 10 January 2024, when he was going with his father and a driver to Jaipur to condole a family member's death, he met with a fatal accident on the Delhi-Mumbai expressway. He is survived by his mother Mrs Pushpa, wife Mrs Sarita, son Khamish, daughter Ginisha and brothers Devendra and Vishesh. He was a star in making that would have shone brighter than the sun but destiny had other plans. In him, we have lost not just an excellent plastic surgeon but also a rare gem of a person who shall be deeply missed by all the lives he touched.

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None.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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