

# The dissection



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## The Dissection.

.. Hiking along the path right from the creaky wooden benches of the Lecture Theatre to the dark indoors of the Dept of Anatomy, we reached the Dissection Hall after three lengthy sleep inducing lectures that tested our patience on the very first day right after sessionals. We were to start Abdomen that day and as per my friend Pragya's say I'd given the initial few pages of the dissection manual, a read. It'd been three months and by now we'd grown quite friendly on table with a few table parties and lots of Truth and Dare and Dumb Shards when extreme dissection started to piss us off. We celebrated our birth days and our success in any test or PCT together, partying out hard at CP. Also we grew quite familiar with our female cadaver ??? Mayawati? who probably heard almost everything we discussed in secret. Altogether our table including me had 3 guys and 7 girls with surprisingly all genius minds.

If there was a PCT, a scholarship programme, a seminar or any academic enterprise, one of the toppers had to be from table 6. I remember the first few days of dissection. ??? HERE THE DEAD ENLIGHTENS THE LIVING? said a rusty yellow iron board outside DH at its entrance.

Facing a dead human body right in front of you was always a haunt. Before joining Med College, dissection was one of my worst fears as I'd seen Munna Bhai faint out of frenzy on holding the scalpel in his hand like a pen. The first day when we were allotted our table and lockers, the bodies had their shrouds on. We were gradually mentally prepared for the big task ahead-that of dissection of course. The other day I almost had a goose's

skin when the shrouds were jerked off the bodies to reveal what it carried inside-a dead fat human female in her mid fifties with all four limbs intact, undissected and fresh.

As months would roll by, she would gradually impart to us what the anatomies of the human body were and eventually get dismantled limb after limb, organ after organ. The memory I have of her this day, fourteen months post dissection is merely that of a limbless torso, skull sawed and brain removed; chest cage ripped apart at the breast bone and the heart and lungs dismembered leaving a gaping cavern. Her face is another undying memory with her jaw half open revealing a neat line of teeth with two or three missing members, the skin of her face drawn tight against the underlying facial bones giving her a curious, grinning expression. There were ten bodies for a hundred of us, being assigned ten to one per table. All the cadavers had been duly processed before being provided to us for dissection and the processing had left them no different from the bunch of roses left to dry under the sun - Black, Stiff, Motionless and Hideous. The daze of seeing the cadaver for the first time was distracted by the harsh, pompous voice of Dr Rastogi who wanted to get done with taking the roll call of a hundred freshers number by number.

We were expecting to be guided about the maiden approach towards studying the cadavers but we were in for a major misunderstanding. ??? All..

.. open your Cunninghams manuals..

.. start reading. Page one to six??™ was all we were worthy of according to Dr Bindal on our first day in medical college.

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But it was an experience! Five students on each side of the cadaver, not being able to raise our heads and look around to evaluate the equally scared peers as to have a good look at the still bodies on the cold steel table before us. Yet gradually one by one by referring from the books, we got the real first glimpse of the inside of our cadavers making us even more inquisitive. And I must confess that the first three pages of the manual were the toughest comprehension passages I had ever read. Medial, Sagittal, Coronal, Axial were all as Latin or German in pronunciation as in comprehension. The description of movements as Abduction, Adduction, Flexion, Circumduction and Extension added to the mounting tension. Surely, reading the first few pages was treacherous for someone who had just eighty two percent in English in the twelfth standard. If you thought that the dissection began from the head and completed with the toe, you are wrong. We started with the lower limb, proceeded to the upper and then to the Thorax and Breast-all in a disorderly order! The first few days we wore rubber gloves which we got from Dispensary Road Dehradun but they were either too large or too small and since our seniors hadn't been using them in 15 years, we too decided to go bare handed.

The funda of doing well in dissection was simple-pay attention in class, read the dissection from Cunningham before handed and keep your patience till you finally search what you wanted. As we dissected the palm, we were expected to identify the Palmer Aponeurosis, the Fascia Reticularis, the Median Nerve and many other bigger tongue twisters. Thus seeing or imagining the structures that were being dissected, I found myself staring at peoples palms in all public places-the DN shop, the Library, the Royal Mess

and even Nescafe. But the next week when the time table on the notice board said ??? Dissection-The Breast??™, I was rather scared. Imagine staring at lemons, oranges and water melons in public! No medical student can ever recall a dissection theatre without the pervasive formalin. It is this acrid liquid that caused a lot of trouble in the initial days. Our cadaver was extra fatty so fat and formalin formed a really deadly pungent combo and we could smell it everywhere-during food, during writing or even playing Table Tennis.

However, looking back today, I realize there were so many untaught, but naturally learnt lessons in those ten months of dissection. Dissection taught me perseverance. We had to understand the intricacies of the human body before getting down to dissecting it. Understanding the greater sac and lesser sac, arguing about the cornea and sclera, and discussing the formation of the arches-all contributed to cracking the mystery of the body bit by bit. If the concept was not clear, then any amount of dissection could not show us what we wanted to see. THE EYES DO NOT SEE WHAT THE MIND DOES NOT KNOW. And the greatest, most important lesson for the life of a doctor- respect for the human body. We owe it to those corpses who lay patiently tutoring us the marvels of the Creation, the beauty of the architecture and reverence to the most awe inspiring creation of God-the Human body!