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memoir

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ABSTRACT

"The Learning Curve: A Neurosurgeon's Memoir," authored by Brigadier Harjinder Singh Bhatoe, is an autobiography of an Indian military neurosurgeon. The author invites readers on an intimate exploration of a life shaped by triumphs, tribulations, and the relentless pursuit of self-discovery as a soldier neurosurgeon. This autobiography is a poignant testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative power of personal growth.

Authors: Brigadier Harjinder Singh Bhatoe

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The narrative unfolds with a refreshing and courageous honesty as the author fearlessly navigates through the highs and lows of their existence. From the early chapters, readers are drawn into the vivid tapestry of the author's past, witnessing the defining moments that have moulded their character. Dr. H.S. Bhatoe started his medical education at the prestigious Armed Force Medical College (AFMC) of Independent India. For him, surgery was a choice, but neurosurgery was a calling. Neurosurgeons are born gentlemen and leaders. A coveted military position was an icing on the cake in his case. He not only excelled as a surgeon but also as a soldier.

In the famous American movie "A Few Good Men," while being interrogated, Col. Jessup (portrayed by Jack Nicholson) counterquestions the young lawyer (portrayed by Tom Cruise), "Ever put your life in another man's hands, ask him to put his life in yours?" This situation is not only for a soldier but also a neurosurgeon as they deal with the most irreversible organ of the body. The author excelled diligently in both roles as a matter of the most responsibility and honour.

Keywords

neurosurgery,
military,
neurosciences,
autobiography



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The book has certain unique attractions for any healthcare professional and regular reader alike, such as intriguing anecdotes from the literature at the beginning of every chapter, setting the tone of the ensuing pages. Foreword by his mentor and Emeritus Professor Vijay Kak MS, FRCS (End & Edin), FAMS, FIHE (London), this book also delves into the details of common and uncommon neurosurgical problems in a way any soldier analyses his enemy. His detailing of surgeries performed on those human beings is as meticulous as assembling a sniper's rifle by a blindfolded sniper. His remarkable remembrance of patients' names, colleagues' mannerisms, and surgical nuances is as fresh as today. Being regularly transferred to many military hospitals and maintaining the records in the non-digital era is no mean feat. His descriptions of neurosurgical ailments are spiritual and empathic. Summarizing within 24 chapters, he takes us on a memory lane spread over a journey of 45 years. Many of these chapters are a surgical treatise where the surgeon's emotions, frustrations, and the entire gamut of surgical conditions are illustrated by a humane neurosurgeon.

Some of his descriptions of surgical steps are detailed enough to be a chapter of any neurosurgical operative atlas. His journey from the angiogram era to 3D endoscopy fascinates seasoned and trainee neurosurgeons alike. His regular postings under challenging terrains and war zones provided him an opportunity to manage many unusual injuries and complications, especially firearm injuries. The narrative is not without its moments of humour, offering a welcome reprieve from the weightier

subjects at hand. The author's wit and self-awareness shine through, creating a dynamic and engaging reading experience.

Apart from being a celebrated neurosurgeon, he was a coveted paratrooper and an honoured President's Guard. The book is a written testimony of secret and overt failures. In these chapters, he has candidly shared his moments of very aggressive, passively aggressive, and observational roles. This soldier doctor is not only a medical fraternity but a respected colleague, a teacher, a guide, a family man, and an internationally admired and acclaimed neurosurgeon.

Neatly presented in a 328-page hardbound first edition, "The Learning Curve" is enriched with coloured photographs and exciting stories of grateful patients, sleep-depriving complications, honest introspections, and lessons. As the story unfolds, the author's growth becomes palpable, showcasing the transformative power of self-reflection and the willingness to confront life's challenges head-on. The book is not merely a recollection of events but a testament to the author's journey towards self-actualization. The last chapter devoted to the family highlights the value of work-life balance and the vital role of our loved ones. It has become an engaging, inspiring, and entertaining read and would be an asset for any personal and institutional library. Readers will undoubtedly find solace, inspiration, and perhaps a reflection of their journeys within the pages of this compelling autobiography.