

Minutes of the Derby Medical Society, Tuesday 8th October 2026
Royal Derby Hospital Education Centre Lecture Theatre

Presidential Address: Wither General Practice-The Sequel

Dr Murali Gembali

Freelance GP

Apologies: None Received

Prof Owen Judd, President for the 2025-2026 season, welcomed everyone to this, the first meeting of the 2026-2027 season. Prof Owen Judd thanked everyone for supporting his enjoyable year as President. He gave a short biopic for Dr Gembali.

Dr Murali Gembali graduated from Leeds University in 1987 followed by House Jobs in Hull and Otley. He undertook GP training in Derby culminating in joining Friargate Surgery (FGS) in 1993. He remained there as a GP partner there until 2019 and then became a freelance GP. He was a lead in commissioning and minor surgery at FGS and member of the LMC for over a decade. Dr Gembali now works part time in both primary and secondary care and enjoys the freedom of being a portfolio GP. In his spare time he enjoys hiking, baking, cooking, reading, playing golf and travelling. Prof Judd formally handed over the Presidential Medal.

Dr Gembali outlined the upcoming programme of lectures that includes a range of exciting guest speakers and a Poster and Presentation evening in which students and trainees are invited to submit their work and winners receiving a prize. Details of the programme can be found on the Derby Medical Society (DMS) website.

Dr Gembali gave an overview of the history of the DMS. It was founded in 1862 for the *'purpose of bringing together medical practitioners from the many diverse branches of medicine to discuss the medical science of the day and to present and discuss cases of interest to its members'* an ethos that continues to this day. Dr Stuart Holloway, President 2017-18, introduced a new motto for the society *'Causa studium medicinae sequendi'* (*'Enabling curiosity in medicine', or literally, 'For the sake of pursuing zeal for medicine'*). The first President was Dr William Ogle FRCP. He worked closely with Florence Nightingale, who had strong local Derbyshire connections, to help establish the Derby Royal Infirmary. The correspondence between Ogle and Nightingale is preserved in the British Library's Nightingale Papers. DMS also has established connections with The Royal Medical Benevolent Fund (RMBF), the UK charity for doctors, medical students and their families. They provide information, support, and financial assistance for doctors and their families.

Dr Gembali acknowledged the challenges in giving a presidential address. In the 1997-98 year Dr Tom Burns, a local GP, gave an address in which he highlighted the issues facing GP's at the time: applying charges/private service, IT investment, additional staffing, abuse of the service; European health service (Dr Burns was to die a few years later on 11/9/01, the day of the '9/11' attacks).

The themes raised by Dr Burns were explored by Dr Gembali in the context of current practice. At the founding of the NHS (1948) funding for GP's was controversial. Prior to this GP's were self employed. However, following the NHS Act (1946) the expectation was of

free access to primary care with GP's as 'gatekeepers' and payment was on capitation basis. To get co-operation from the medical profession, Anuerin Bevan said "ultimately I had to stuff their mouths with gold". The everyday experience in primary care at the times of Dr Burns was of often single handed practice, managing consultations/home visits/prescriptions often from their homes, basic record keeping. Today demand still exceeds supply but there are more private consultations (13% vs <3% in 2006) with speed of access being a key driver particularly in young adults.

IT systems have changed dramatically from the 'paper records' of the Lloyd George system through EMIS and System 1. In 1997 the investment was equivalent to £98million. By 26/27 this was £320million.

Primary care has also seen significant workforce changes. The first ANP role was in 1988, with formal training by RCN in 1991 and a Master degree since 2018. Currently there are 4600 WTE ANP's in Primary Care (16%) of workforce with an aim for 39000 by 2036/7. The changing workforce has implications and a recent BMA review found 25% of GP's qualifying in 2025 were not employed and RCGP found 53% were without secured employment. The NHS is the biggest UK employer (1.6million FTE, 1:17) and staffing costs account for 50% of the budget. The budget is expected to continue to rise reaching an estimated £265billion by 2036/37).

A move towards a European Health Service as envisaged by Dr Burns is now unlikely to occur in the light of the referendum in which the electorate voted to leave the EU.

In the final part of his presentation Dr Gembali talked about his personal journey. He was born in South India. He showed his plane ticket from the journey to London in 1969, a one way ticket for a child equivalent in today's money of £1490. He shared family pictures from growing up in Luton before going to Leeds University from where he graduated in 1987. After house jobs in Yorkshire he came to Derby where he completed his GP training. Since 2019 he has worked as a freelance GP. He has experienced the NHS not only from a workplace perspective but also as a patient. He talked through his feeling following a traumatic injury and the long recovery from major spinal surgery. Dr Gembali expanded on his varied interests. His talk contained pictures of the various baking experiments (and at the end of the meeting tasting of a super cake!). He is a talented footballer and played in the Medical World Cup in 2004 for England against Germany. He was on the wrong end of a crunching tackle and played the last part of the game in pain only to later find his fibula had been fractured. He enjoys golf and aims to stay fit with regular exercise. He is a keen traveller both in the UK but also across the world and talked about some of his recent journeys.

Dr Gembali finished by thanking everyone for coming and listening.

30 members and guests were in attendance.