



Mysterious healers

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Submitted: 23-JUL-2020

Accepted: 30-JUL-2020

Published: 04-AUG-2020



Artwork credit:

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16 weeks.

This is how long the lockdown has aged. It feels almost as if I'm existing in an alternate universe. All will resume to normal reality once I feel the rays of the sun on my face and wake up. I do awaken, but it is to a dull aching shoulder pain and a dizzy head.

With her brows creased in worry, my mom scurries to prepare an ice compress for me. She forbids me from any exertion and leaves behind in my room the lingering sweetness of incense. A string of prayers move her lips, convincing the lord to bless my fragile shoulders.

My growling stomach pulls me to the breakfast table. Dad, with a triumphant smile, rambles about how our Whatsapp family group has always come to his aid and now to the aid of his constipation. He sets off to grind asafoetida, to mix it in his daily cup of curd, certain that it will make his morning routine as smooth as the butter he spread on his now half-eaten toast.

Dawn knocks on our doors and it is Mrs Kaushik, wearing her expensive facemask. Her voice is confident when she spills her beloved secret that osteoporosis can only be reversed by hot oil massages with black mustard seeds on half moon nights, leaving my grandma's eyes full of youthful hope.

Cite this article as: Asrani MR. Mysterious healers. RHIME. 2020;7:181-2.

Ice fails to numb my pain while I think how it's been three years into my journey studying medicine, and I suspect that I might be running low on vitamin D. My imposter mind awaits a pathologist's affirmation.

My physician's clinic greets me with a long queue. Breaking the queue, I peep in to see the cause of the noisy commotion. A 40-year old woman is bellowing with anger, adamant that her runny nose is nothing short of sinusitis. She exits, glad to announce that she is right to think doctors are skilled con-artists and liars unlike the internet which one can consult without fear of being conned.

I reach home to my dad wrinkling his nose at the taste of his 'medicated' cup of curd that he usually licks clean with satisfying relish. I hand him a glass of water and Psyllium husk hoping that will end his misery. While he gulps down water, I ponder on how medical

advice spreads faster than wildfire and it reaches the masses - accessible at their fingertips through data packets traveling as fast as light. Unfortunate, how a clinically arrived at diagnosis isn't provisional anymore but is absolutely fatal and a reason for panic and mass hysteria. I eye my Cholecalciferol capsules, metaphors for the bitter truth that search engines provide all but essential advice.

My father pats me goodnight with his wrinkled fingers. A funny realisation dawns upon me - we all need laxatives to be prescribed to us. Take one table-spoonful of trust, drink it with informed-credible-information once a day, before bedtime. Continue the dose till misinformation is successfully washed out from societal structures and stop only when we can re-establish the trust we should have in our healthcare system and in medical practitioners.

Acknowledgements: Dr Anuradha Joshi, Department of Pharmacology, and Dr Haryax Pathak, former Intern, Pramukh Swami Medical College, Karamsad, Gujarat, for their constant support and guidance.