

rather, in contemporary society science graduates are converting their knowledge into wealth.

Science has, and will continue to have, a definite role in the future of India<sup>1-4,12</sup>. If Indian society wants to increase the scientific wealth of the country<sup>13</sup> and see several Nobel Prizes, then the advice of the great Indian scientist Homi Bhabha on education must be addressed<sup>1</sup>. The problems hampering Indian science<sup>14,15</sup> need to be addressed, and the quality of journals should be made comparable with the best in the world<sup>16</sup>. Children and youth should be taught well, so that they can change India for generations to come.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. I am grateful to my teachers. I thank IIFM, Bhopal for providing me access to the library. This article resulted from my summer internship that gave me an opportunity to know what it takes to become a good scientist.

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## White coat in the medical profession

Patients' perception of doctors in their white coats has an important role in the doctor–patient relationship. The white coat depicts the complete image of a doctor in the hospital. Surprisingly, in recent times, there is a gradual decline in the number of medicos wearing white coats. Unfortunately, the younger generation also dislikes to wear white coats, especially after passing the final MBBS examination. A visit to any hospital, would corroborate this sad tale.

Contrary to the usual misconception that patients, especially children, fear doctors in white coats, the results of a study conducted by McCarthy *et al.*<sup>1</sup>, in the Children's Hospital, Denver, surprisingly showed that children are not afraid of doctors in white coats<sup>1</sup>. A multiple questionnaire distributed to all the patients in Saint Marianna Hospital, Tokyo, showed that 71% of patients preferred doctors with a white coat compared to

29% who preferred them in casual clothes<sup>2</sup>. The most important reason for preference to the white coat is its cleanliness. Interestingly, it has been found that the patient's preference to white coats also increases with age.

The white coat worn by the physician signifies adoption and acceptance of aseptic and precautionary measures. *Staphylococcus aureus* and Gram-negative bacilli are the commonest organisms contaminating hospital uniforms<sup>3</sup>. A neat and tidy physician's attire would definitely add to the patient's satisfaction during any consultation, besides checking entry of unwanted micro-organisms.

A casual attitude by the physician and relaxation of rules by the hospital authorities have resulted in this scenario. It has to be clearly understood that when a doctor dons the white coat, he/she defines himself/herself in the medical profession. It also sets a trend for the

younger generation of doctors, nurses and paramedical staff to follow. The white coat should be recognized as a major component of the doctor–patient relationship and must be worn by all doctors on duty.

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## Future of science and science education in India

The interview of C. N. R. Rao with Nirupa Sen (*Curr. Sci.*, 2002, **82**, 788–792) is timely and covers many issues

which have far-reaching consequences. Rao has clearly emphasized several key science policy issues, including food,

shelter and clean water which are often forgotten by our scientists and policy makers. Rao's vision and ideas about