

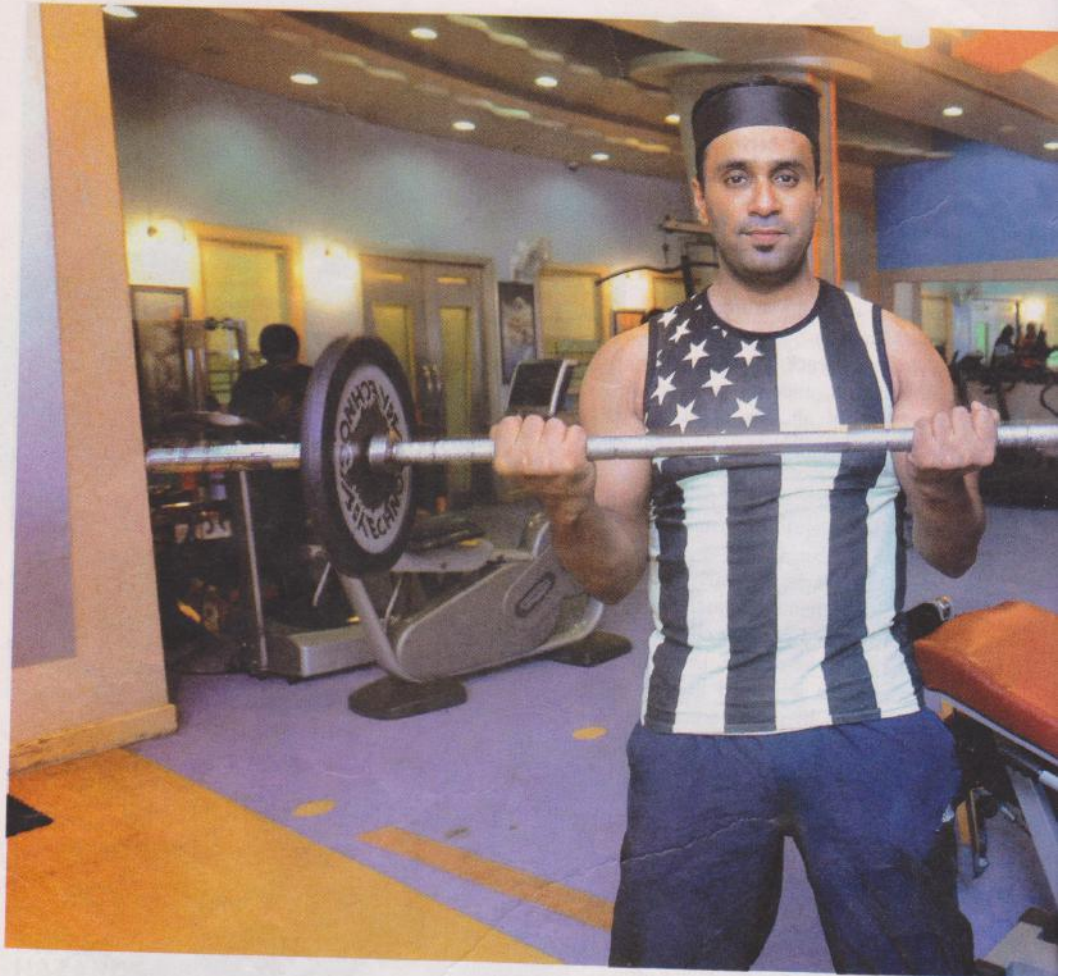
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**Why
I regret
becoming a
doctor**

COVER STORY



she started relating to them," he says. "The problem became so severe that her husband approached me and asked for help. She was suffering from depression and was put on antidepressants. I asked her to reduce the workload for the time being and stick to the treatment I prescribed."

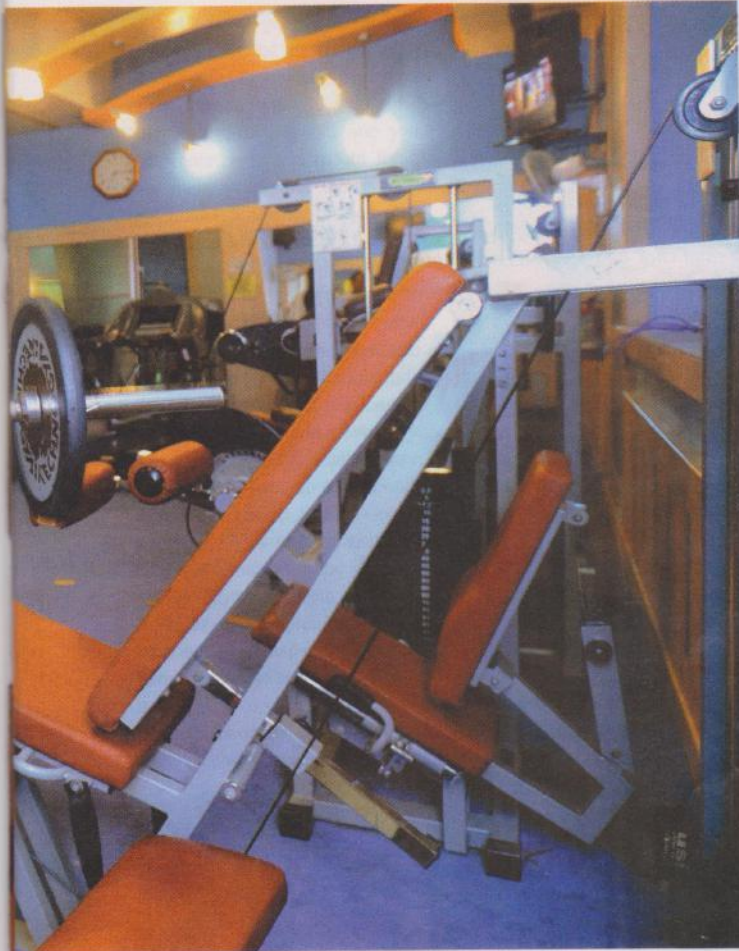
Medical colleges say their students are vulnerable to sleep-related problems, and psychiat-

ric and general health issues. "A junior doctor has to do 36 hours duty, which messes up his sleep rhythm. Lack of sleep further culminates in various health issues such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiac issues," says Dr Manisha Gupta, a Chandigarh-based physician.

Doctors say though they can take precautions to minimise the risk of infection, it is not always possible. According to guide-

lines, doctors in dental and surgical departments should take the same precautions with every patient as they would take in case of an HIV positive patient. But because of the high cost of the protective gear—₹4,500—they seldom do it.

In the west, doctors are given many privileges to deal with the hazards that come with their profession. For example, a psychiatrist is given one month's



JANAK BHAT

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leave to deal with burnout. They also have to undergo psychoanalysis at regular intervals. But in India, there is no such provision.

But at the Group of TB Hospitals, Sewri, Mumbai, doctors have proposed a tuberculosis leave. A doctor should be fully paid for the duration he is under treatment for tuberculosis. The proposal came after three doctors lost their lives to tuberculosis in the last few years. "Doctors here are at high risk of contracting the worst form of tuberculosis. The treatment takes a toll on their physical as well as mental health. A paid leave ensures that they are not worried about their finances," says Dr Rajendra Nanware, consultant, GTB Hospitals.

Also, it is ironical that doctors who advise their patients to follow a balanced diet often find it difficult to do that themselves. "I can't walk out of a surgery to have my lunch or leave a long queue of patients outside my cabin to have my dinner," says Shome. "A balanced diet is a luxury for us. Generally, we grab an easy meal that we take in between seeing our patients."

Doctors and other staff at Sewri hospital are now given nutritional breakfast. "Studies state that the risk of contracting an infection increases if one is on empty stomach," says Dr Jagdish Keni, medical superintendent, GTB Hospitals. "A high-protein diet boosts immunity and gives a shield against infections."

However, more such proposals and precautions for doctors are needed to keep diseases and disillusionment at bay. ●