



Navigating early-career challenges: reflections of a young Endocrinologist

Pooja Tiwari, MBBS, MD, DM Endocrinology

Assistant professor, Department of Endocrinology and Metabolism, AIIMS - CAPFIMS, New Delhi.

Corresponding Author:

Dr Pooja Tiwari,

Assistant Professor, Department of Endocrinology & Metabolism,

AIIMS - CAPFIMS, Maidan garhi, Asola, New Delhi

Email: drpoojat91 at gmail dot com

Received: 22-NOV-2025

Accepted: 20-JAN-2026

Published: 14-FEB-2026

I completed my entire medical education in government institutions - earning my MBBS from Bhagalpur; MD in Medicine from Patna; and DM in Endocrinology from Gauhati Medical College and Hospital, Guwahati. Though this path might appear conventional from afar, it entailed relentless effort and struggles, like any other pursuer.

During my internship, I developed a keen interest in Internal Medicine and later Endocrinology. I was fortunate to navigate my path with growing clarity and conviction.

Training Years at Guwahati

My DM training at Gauhati Medical College under the mentorship of my HOD and guide was transformative, both professionally and personally. But truly, I came to appreciate it more after completing my training. She exemplified true mentorship - deeply engaged with her patients, disciplined, and compassionate. She would consistently go beyond expectations to help her patients. Those three years honed my clinical instincts and shaped my understanding of what it means to be a true clinician.

I vividly remember a 12-year-old girl with type-1 diabetes who had extremely poor glycemic control due to various factors. She had developed bilateral cataracts, and had almost lost her vision. Madam made it her mission to get the vision reinstated. She

admitted her, stabilised her glucose level, and got both cataracts operated on. Under consistent follow-up, the girl now maintains good glycemic control as well. This taught me not only the science behind hormones but also the art of empathy.

First Steps After Training

After completing my DM, I returned to Lucknow, my hometown. Stepping away from the structured environment of academic training into independent practice was unsettling and unfamiliar. Like many young clinicians, I was uncertain about the next steps. To gain experience, while not lose time, I joined a corporate hospital. This experience turned out to be a crucial one. I had the privilege of working with a highly respected and senior consultant Endocrinologist, a clinician renowned for his integrity and ethics. His mentorship over those eleven months was invaluable. He would see each patient with remarkable patience, honesty, and attention to detail. He would ask me to discuss interesting cases, building the habit of collaboration. Additionally, he introduced me to his wife, a professor of Pediatric Endocrinology, who generously supported me in managing pediatric endocrine cases when needed. These experiences taught me that mentorship continues even beyond formal training - often in unexpected ways. Their willingness to teach and share their

Cite this article as: Tiwari P. Navigating early-career challenges: reflections of a young Endocrinologist. RHIME. 2026;13:11-12.

knowledge enriched my early clinical growth.

A New Chapter: AIIMS-CAPFIMS, New Delhi

Despite a fulfilling start, a part of me felt there was more to explore. I wanted to get involved in academics and research, apart from just patient care. Hence, I interviewed at AIIMS-CAPFIMS in New Delhi and was fortunate to be selected. It was a new institute mainly serving paramilitary forces, and was an opportunity to contribute to building a department from the ground up. The prospect of setting up a department, shaping a system, and growing with an institution fascinated me. I decided to take that leap. I worked from scratch - building a team, carrying out procurements, establishing facilities such as diabetic foot examinations and fundus photography, and conducting outreach camps. I learnt further about leadership skills, teaching learning techniques and gained from experiences of stalwarts of the Department of Endocrinology & Metabolism at AIIMS New Delhi. However, being a beginner, I have had my share of challenges as well at many levels, such as in procurement, administrative dealings, team building and leading, and planning research in a limited setup. Eleven months into this role, I remain gratified despite the steep learning curve. Self-doubt occasionally surfaces, but every day adds to my professional growth.

The Role of Rejections and Uncertainty

I encountered rejection multiple times, such as failed faculty interviews, manuscript rejections, and staggered patient flow. Self-doubt is a natural feeling; however, I continue to try to work towards improving myself. I now view setbacks as necessary, as they hone resilience and patience, and teach perspective.

Young professionals often face the dilemma of choice: the corporate sector, with financial rewards but limited research opportunities; academia, which provides teaching and research satisfaction but might not meet financial goals; or independent practice, which demands courage and resources.

Mentors often advise: “Do what you love.” Yet, discovering one's true calling is not always straightforward. Sometimes, it is faint and drowned by ambitions, expectations, and responsibilities. During such periods, perseverance and sincerity in whatever opportunity presents itself allow purposes to unfold gradually.

Path to the Future

My journey so far has been quite interesting, with lots of challenges coming my way. I always pushed my limits, and made it a point to get out of my comfort zone. I am still navigating my path in the vast landscape of endocrinology. By sharing this story, I hope to reassure young professionals that feeling lost early on is normal. Each person's life choices are different, and one should pursue them, no matter what. Although the initial years may be confusing and frustrating, sustained honesty and hard work align things over time. As my dear senior and friend recently said, “The Medical field is a long-run game and learning here requires grit, determination, and sacrifice,” and I couldn't agree more. Overall, I believe I have been blessed with the right kind of mentors at the right stages, who helped me grow both professionally and personally.

As I continue to learn and evolve, I remind myself that the journey is not about reaching an ideal destination, but about growing into a better version of myself with every patient, every lesson, and every day.

Acknowledgements: With gratitude to Dr Uma Kaimal Saikia (Professor & HOD of Endocrinology, Gauhati Medical College & Hospital), Dr Eesh Bhatia (Senior Consultant Endocrinologist, Apollomedics Superspeciality hospital), and Dr Vijayalakshmi Bhatia (Professor of Endocrinology, SGPGIMS, Lucknow) for guidance and inspiration during my formative years in endocrinology; and to Dr Sumit Kumar (Consultant Cardiologist, Max hospital, New Delhi), whose words on perseverance and purpose in medicine continue to guide me.